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PRESENTS...

INTERNATIONAL GAMES DAY

NOVEMBER 2014

“LET’S PLAY!” – LEARNING STATIONS WITH LANGUAGE GAMES

LEVEL

Lower Intermediate and above

BACKGROUND

Playing games in the English Language classroom provides several benefits to learners: games can increase motivation, develop teamwork and social skills, and enable students to practice original, creative language while having a great time! To celebrate International Games Day’s spirit of learning and fun, you can use resources from *Activate: Games for Learning American English* to create game stations in your classroom. You can dedicate an entire class period (or more!) to these learning games.

Activate: Games for Learning American English includes 11 board games. The game boards show paths made up of spaces that players must follow. Each turn allows them to move forward by the number of spaces indicated by their roll of the dice. The spaces contain prompts that ask players to orally produce an English phrase. The players’ goal is to move as fast as possible from the “Start” to the “Finish” space. Players may also land on “penalty” spaces that keep them from moving forward or make them move backwards.

Each board game has a unique theme that requires the students to produce certain types of English expressions. Each theme provides players with opportunities to creatively make up sentences that express their own ideas and opinions. Students’ responses in each game are open-ended, and there is never just one correct answer for any prompt.

Each of the 11 board games has a distinct appearance; however, all games share the same basic structure. Once learners play their first game, little instruction is needed for them to learn to play other games. The common design features make these games ideal for use in learning stations. Groups of students simultaneously play different games at several stations. After a designated amount of time elapses, groups rotate stations and start playing a new game. This learning station approach enables students to enjoy several games and practice a wide variety of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and functional meanings.

GOALS

While playing a variety of games, students will:

- Listen to and orally practice vocabulary, grammar features, and functional language frameworks.
- Use creative thinking, life experiences, and personal preferences to make original verbal responses during game play.
- Have fun!

MATERIALS

- A selection of *Activate: Games for Learning American English* game boards aligned with your students' level, such as:
 - [Have You Ever? Oh, When?](#)
 - [Name Your Favorite](#)
 - [Which One is Different? Why?](#)
 - [Name 3](#)
 - [About Me](#)

You can find all 11 *Activate* board games [here](#).

- Dice or dice alternatives (e.g., pencils with numbers 1-6 written on each side, which can be “rolled” like dice; [dice made from paper](#)); you’ll need one die per game station. Note: *die* is the singular form of the noun *dice* – a good language point to cover with students!
- Game pieces to represent each player’s position on the game board. You can use coins, buttons, balls of colored paper or clay, colored paper clips, plastic figurines, or unique stones.
- Teacher - whiteboard, chalkboard; markers or chalk; overhead projector (optional); a timing device

PREPARATION

Before class, set up game stations and prepare materials for each station:

1. Review the board game options and, depending on your students’ proficiency level, select the games you want to use.
2. Determine the number of stations you want to create. Download and print or photocopy an appropriate number of the game boards, enough to have one board per station. Ideally, groups at each station will contain no more than three to four students to maximize language production.
 - For example, if you want to set up 10 stations for 40 students, you need 10 game boards for 10 groups of four students.
3. Establish game stations in different locations around the classroom. At each station, groups should be able to gather around a small table or desk where the board is placed for all students to see and work on. Depending on your classroom environment and the students’ comfort, you can also create stations in different areas on the floor. Ensure each station has a game board, a die, and enough game pieces for each student to have a unique item.
 - If you have a large class, you can create groups of stations where students all play the same game. For example, in a class of 60 students playing four different board games, designate four large areas in the classroom. In one area, four groups (of three to four students each) play Game 1 at different stations; in another area, four groups play Game 2 at different stations; and so on. When it is time to switch stations, groups

playing at Game 1 stations all move to Game 2 stations; groups playing at Game 2 stations all move to Game 3 stations; etc.

PROCEDURES

1. Choose one board game to use while you demonstrate the game play process.
 - a. Draw or project a copy of the board game on the whiteboard, chalkboard, or wall.
 - b. Explain that the goal is to be the first player to move from the “Start” space to the “Finish” space. Tell students they will do this by taking turns rolling the dice and responding in English to the prompts in the associated squares.
 - c. Show students how to roll the die and move a game piece, then demonstrate a prompt and a response. For example, if you are demonstrating “Have You Ever...? Oh, When?” and you land on “Have you ever traveled by train?”, you can answer “Yes, I have travelled by train.” Prompt the class to ask you “Oh, when?” and then respond “Last Thursday.” Explain that there is not one “correct” answer for each prompt; instead, the goal is to practice using English and be creative.
 - d. Tell students each player only gets to roll the die one time per turn. Demonstrate a few more rolls and elicit responses to the game board prompts from student volunteers.
 - e. Explain that while one player is speaking, the other players must listen carefully because they are responsible for remembering the responses that are given. In all of the games, a player must say something new each time he or she lands on a space. If a player attempts to repeat a previously given response (their own or another player’s), the other players need to recognize the repetition and not accept the response. If needed, you can provide examples of the language students can use to reject repeated responses, such as: “That answer has been used. Do you have another idea?” or “Someone already said that. Can you think of another answer?”
 - f. Be sure to show students what happens when someone lands on a penalty space, such as “Bad luck! Go back 10 spaces!”
 - g. Tell students not to write on the game boards since other groups will use them.
2. Games usually take 7-15 minutes to play one round. Establish a time limit for each round of play and determine the direction in which students will rotate among stations. Share the time limit with the students and explain the procedure for switching stations.
 - a. For example, when there are three minutes left in a round you can give students a warning signal (turning lights off and on, ringing a bell, clapping, playing a short bit of music). When time is up, use the signal again and loudly say “Switch!” Tell groups they have one minute to move to the next station before the timer for the next round starts. This process can motivate students to rotate quickly: the longer it takes them to switch stations, the less time they will have to play the next game.
 - b. Explain that if a group completes a game before time expires, they should start a new round of the same game and play until time is up.
 - c. Students should carry their unique game piece with them when they move between stations.
3. Put students into groups and assign each group a starting station. Set the timer and begin the first round of play.

4. While students are playing, circulate around the classroom and briefly answer any questions the groups have. Some students may want you to determine if an answer is “correct.” Remind students that answers to these questions have to do with personal preferences and opinions, so there are no “correct” answers. Remind students that while the games are being played, the purpose is to have fun and practice speaking and listening. Standing quietly off to the side, you can make notes about errors you observe for use in the feedback session, but you should not correct students’ grammar or vocabulary usage during play. These games promote spontaneous language use and fluency over accuracy.
5. When the first round ends, facilitate the process of switching stations. Repeat the process until all groups have played every game, or until the class has played the desired number of rounds.
6. When all rounds of play are finished, bring the class back together for a feedback session, which can incorporate any of the following items:
 - Ask students to share some of the most interesting or creative responses they heard while playing.
 - Answer any student questions about the language featured in the games.
 - Conduct a brief grammar or vocabulary review based on the common errors you observed during game play.
 - Ask students for feedback about their favorite games and what they learned.
 - Ask all game winners to raise their hands or stand up and receive a round of applause.

ADAPT IT TO YOUR CLASS – EXTENSION AND VARIATION IDEAS

- **Try a game variation:** The downloadable *Activate* board game instructions include several variations that can increase the complexity or content of student responses or game play. Provide game variation instructions at each station. Groups that finish a “traditional” game before time expires can re-play the game using the variation instructions.
- **Create your own board games:** It’s time to get creative! Teachers and students can follow the *Activate* format and rules to create their own exciting language learning board games.
 - Select grammar features, target vocabulary, or other functional language items that are relevant to your students’ communicative needs or local environment.
 - Use this [board game template](#) to get started, or develop an original board game layout.
 - Use inexpensive materials that you have lying around like old cardboard boxes or pizza box tops to create sturdy board games that can be enjoyed for a long time.
 - Also, be sure to have fun illustrating and decorating the game boards!

For inspiration, check out these amazing board games created by EFL teachers who participated in “Shaping the Way We Teach English” Webinar Course 11:

- **Island Survivor** by Jessica Corro from Peru
 - **What Do You Know About Sports?** by Ulyana Shuman from Kazakhstan
 - **Sugar Hunt & Instructions** by Rizki Nur from Indonesia
- **Include a video game station:** Do you have access to a computer lab or internet-ready classroom computers? If so, check out [Trace Effects](#), an adventure game for English language learners (ages 12 and up). Students can play alone or with partners for an action-packed



learning experience. Once students are familiar with the *Trace Effects* rules and game controls, consider including a “Trace Effects” station as part of your learning game station rotations.