Fun with Grammar: Bringing Language Learning to Life through Games

Kate Bain and Lauren Whitaker
Poll Questions:

1. Agree / Disagree: The focus of grammar instruction should always be direct teaching of rules.

2. Grammar games can help students ______________ grammar structures.

3. What should you consider when planning a game for your classroom?
What Do I Know About?

START: Get your game face on

- Tokyo
- Do back to Coffee (13 spaces)
- Tigers
- Electricity
- Crocodiles
- Australia
- The Pacific Ocean
- Jazz music
- The moon
- Love
- Diamonds
- Flowers
- Baseball
- Coffee
- Brazil

Get your game face on!
What Do I Know About?

START: Get your game face on

Tokyo  do back to Coffee (13 spaces)  Tigers
Acorn Kame  Electricity  Kenya
Flowers  Crocodiles  Jazz music
Baseball  Coffee  Australia
Brazil  Noodles  The Pacific
Coffee  The moon

FINISH

Love
Flowers
Baseball
Brazil
Coffee
Crocodiles
Jazz music
Noodles
Learning
The Pacific
Ocean
The moon

Dice: 3, 1
What words come to mind when *you* think of “grammar”?

- important
- challenging
- structure
- exciting
- practice
- necessary
- linguistics
- fun
- practical
What words come to mind when your students think of “grammar”?

boring
repetitive
structure
a lot of work
difficult
“What’s the point?”
How is grammar typically taught at your school?
Has this ever happened to you?
Why Games?

Reviewing, reusing, and recycling newly encountered [language] is imperative if students are to fully own [it].

- Nico Lorenzutti
Why Games?

Games...

1. Lower the affective filter
2. Increase student talk time
3. Encourage personal involvement
4. Allow teachers to informally assess students
5. Motivate students
6. Involve everyone in class
7. Allow for *fun practice* of language
What is the purpose of using games in class?

to reinforce what has already been taught
Meeting Educational Goals

• What specific grammar point are you aiming to introduce or practice with this game?
• Are the instructions and rules easy to understand?
• Does the level of difficulty match the class skill level?
• Does the game require maximum student engagement?
• Will this game cause a classroom management issue?
Setting up the Grammar Game Classroom

- Dice
- Game Pieces
- Boards
- Group Size
- Procedure
- Time Limit
No dice or game pieces? No problem!
Game Boards
Activate: Games for Learning American English

Grammar Focus: Present Perfect

Levels: Intermediate/Advanced

Aims:
- Practice present perfect form
- Enhance conversational skills
- Maintain interest in classroom topics
Have You Ever? Oh, When?

**Step One:** Students get into groups of 3 - 4.

**Step Two:** Students decide who will take the first turn. They will play in clockwise order thereafter.

**Step Three:** Students move their game pieces along the path according to the number indicated by the dice.

**Step Four:** Students read the question that they land on to the group.

**Step Five:** Each student replies. If they answer “yes,” they should describe the last time they did the activity. If the answer is “no,” they should describe a related activity that they have done.
Have You Ever...?
Oh, When?

Start: we're so ready!

- Have you ever swum in a river?
- Have you ever watched a baseball game?
- Have you ever traveled by train?
- Have you ever traveled to another country?
- Have you ever been to another continent?
- Have you ever cooked dinner for someone?
- Have you ever kissed an animal?
- Have you ever worn a hat?
- Have you ever sung a song in an English lesson?
- Have you ever read a novel in English?
- Have you ever slept outside, under the stars?
- Have you ever eaten really spicy food?
- Bad luck! Go back 10 spaces.

Have you ever eaten sushi?
- Have you ever borrowed something from someone?
- Have you ever played a piano?
- Have you ever seen a ghost?
- Have you ever climbed a mountain?
- Have you ever lost your cell phone?

Finish
Have You Ever...?
Oh, When?

Start: we're so ready

- Have you ever swum in a river?
- Have you ever watched a baseball game?
- Have you ever traveled by train?
- Have you ever traveled to another country?
- Have you ever been to another continent?
- Have you ever cooked dinner for someone?
- Have you ever kissed an animal?
- Have you ever worn a hat?
- Have you ever sung a song in a car?
- Have you ever missed an English lesson?
- Have you ever read a novel in English?
- Have you ever slept outside, under the stars?
- Have you ever eaten really spicy food?
- Bad luck! Go back 10 spaces.
- Have you ever eaten sushi?
- Have you ever borrowed something from someone?
- Have you ever played a piano?
- Have you ever seen a ghost?
- Have you ever climbed a mountain?
- Have you ever lost your cell phone?

Finish
Have You Ever...
Oh, When?

Start: we're so ready

Have you ever
swum in a
river?

Have you ever
watched a
baseball game?

Have you ever
treaveled by
train?

Have you ever
treaveled to
another country?

Have you ever
been to another
continent?

Have you ever
cooked dinner
for someone?

Have you ever
kissed an
animal?

Have you ever
worn a hat?

Have you ever
sung a song
in a car?

Have you ever
assisted an
English lesson?

Have you ever
read a novel?
in English?

Have you ever
slept outside,
under the stars?

Have you ever
eaten really
spicy food?

Bad luck!
Go back
10 spaces.

Have you ever
played the piano?

Have you ever
seen a ghost?

Have you ever
climbed a
mountain?

Have you ever
lost your
cell phone?

Finish

Have you ever
been to another
continent?
Activate: Games for Learning American English

Grammar Focus:
• Present Simple

Aims:
• Practice present simple form
• Enhance conversational skills
• Maintain interest in classroom topics

Levels:
• Any
What Someone Does...

**Step One:** Students get into groups of 3 - 4.

**Step Two:** Students decide who will take the first turn. They will play in clockwise order thereafter.

**Step Three:** Students move their game pieces along the path according to the number indicated by the dice.

**Step Four:** Students read the phrase that they land on to the group.

**Step Five:** Students list three things that one does in this place or condition. No player is allowed to repeat something that has already been said.
What Someone Does

- Start: We're pumped
  - In a movie theater
  - At the beach
  - On vacation
  - In a car
  - In New York
  - At a birthday party

- On a tropical island
  - In China
  - In a kitchen
  - Go back 9 spaces
  - On a large ship
  - At a wedding
  - Go back to start

- In English class
  - When watching a scary film
  - When hungry
  - When in love
  - When late for an appointment
  - When sick

- Finish: On vacation
Activate: Games for Learning American English

Grammar Focus:
• Past Simple

Levels:
• Any

Aims:
• Practice past simple form
• Enhance conversational skills
• Maintain interest in classroom topics
The Truth About Me

**Step One:** Students get into **groups of 3 - 4**.

**Step Two:** Students decide who will take the first turn. They will play in clockwise order thereafter.

**Step Three:** Students move their game pieces along the path according to the number indicated by the dice.

**Step Four:** Students read the word that they land on to the group.

**Step Five:** Players then use the word to make a true sentence about themselves.
USE A WORD
Group Grammar
Objective: Students practice the simple past tense

Materials: Student pieces of paper

Steps:
1. Model sentences about your weekend
2. Students write their sentences independently
3. Students put unique sentences together in groups
4. Group with the most correct sentences wins
Model Sentences

- I did laundry.
- I went for a walk.
- I went shopping.
- I cooked dinner for my family.
- I went to a party.
- I traveled to a nearby city.
Students Write Independently

- Give students a few minutes to write their own sentences
- Encourage students to use as many different *verbs* as possible
- Mistakes are acceptable at this stage
Students Work in Groups

• Have students get together in groups and share their sentences
• At this time, students can correct each other’s mistakes
• Students then create a list of all their weekend activities
Twist: No Repeat Verbs!

• Patricia played tennis.
• Ahmed saw a great movie.
• Taki made sushi for his friends.
• Sylvie had a headache. \[\textbf{X}\]
• Patricia had a burrito.
• Ahmed did his homework.
• Taki wrote an essay for his English class.
• Sylvie took a walk.
Students Change Verbs

- Patricia played tennis.
- Ahmed saw a great movie.
- Taki made sushi for his friends.
- Sylvie had a headache.
- Patricia *had* a burrito. → Patricia *ate* a burrito.
- Ahmed did his homework.
- Taki wrote an essay for his English class.
- Sylvie took a walk.
Group with the most correct sentences wins!
What’s the best way to correct student sentences for this game?

- Teacher checks each group’s sentences as they work on other activities
- Students correct themselves
- Students correct other groups’ sentences
- Students correct all sentences as a class
What other questions or prompts could you use for...

- the simple present tense
  
  Example: *What do you usually do after school?*

- the present perfect tense
  
  Example: *What have you learned about this school year?*
Creating Your Own Board Game (CYOOG)
Board Game - Considerations

Be familiar with board games in your class.

• Reflect on what works and what doesn’t
• Establish classroom routines for board games
• Model play to the whole class before dividing students into groups
• Monitor groups to answer questions and to ensure fairness
CYO BG – Teacher Steps

1. Choose a theme
   • Grammar pattern or topic

2. Create questions, prompts or cues for each space
   • Add chance and surprise by adding prompts like “Lose a turn,” “Go back #_spaces,” etc.)
CYOBG – Teacher Steps

3. Test the game before you play in class
4. Model for your students
5. Have students play the game
6. Revise if necessary
CYOBG – Student Project

1. Make sure students are familiar with classroom games
2. Give students a list of topics to choose from
3. Model or do a “think aloud” for creating your own board game
4. Students work in groups to create board games
CYOBG – Student Project

5. Teacher corrects and grades board games
6. Students make changes and revisions as needed
7. Have a game day in class – students play each other’s board games!
Student Names: ________________________________
Grammar Theme: ______________________________
Objective(s): ________________________________
Rules: 1. ________________________________
       2. ________________________________
       3. ________________________________
Prompts/Questions (for game spaces):
• ________________________________________________________________________
• ________________________________________________________________________
• ________________________________________________________________________
• ________________________________________________________________________
• ________________________________________________________________________
Student Names: Mamadou, Kyoto, Lindsey, Greta, Jose

Grammar Theme: Modal verbs

Objectives: Practice giving advice using modal verbs and make it to the end first.

Rules: 1. Roll the dice to move forward spaces.
   2. Respond to each scenario in the game board spaces. You must use a modal verb to give advice. (Should, ought to, had better [not])
   3. Follow the other prompts (lose a turn, go forward or backwards, etc.)
   4. The first person who makes it to the end wins!

Prompts/Questions (for game spaces):
• Your friend feels sick today but it’s a school day. What should she do?
• Your friend just got a new pet. What should he do to take care of it?
• Your friend wants to travel to a new city. What should he bring in his suitcase?
• Your friend has a job interview tomorrow. What should she do to prepare?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy of Content</strong></td>
<td>All prompts and answers made for the game are correct.</td>
<td>Most prompts and answers made for the game are correct.</td>
<td>Only a few prompts and answers made for the game are correct.</td>
<td>Only one or no prompts and answers made for the game are correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rules</strong></td>
<td>Rules were very clear and accurate.</td>
<td>Rules were written, but one part of the game needed slightly more explanation.</td>
<td>Rules were written, but some rules were very confusing.</td>
<td>The rules were not written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperative work</strong></td>
<td>The group worked well together and contributed ideas and listened to other ideas.</td>
<td>The group generally worked well together with most members contributing ideas.</td>
<td>The group worked fairly well together but some members did not contribute or listen to other ideas.</td>
<td>The group often did not work well together and the game appeared to be the work of only 1-2 students in the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creativity</strong></td>
<td>The group put a lot of thought into making the game interesting and fun to play as shown by creative questions, game pieces and/or game board.</td>
<td>The group put some thought into making the game interesting and fun.</td>
<td>The group tried to make the game interesting and fun, but some of the things made the game more confusing.</td>
<td>Little thought was put into making the game interesting or fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy of Content</td>
<td>All prompts and answers made for the game are correct.</td>
<td>Most prompts and answers made for the game are correct.</td>
<td>Only a few prompts and answers made for the game are correct.</td>
<td>Only one or no prompts and answers made for the game are correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Rules were very clear and accurate.</td>
<td>Rules were written, but one part of the game needed slightly more explanation.</td>
<td>Rules were written, but some rules were very confusing.</td>
<td>The rules were not written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative work</td>
<td>The group worked well together and contributed ideas and listened to other ideas.</td>
<td>The group generally worked well together with most members contributing ideas.</td>
<td>The group worked fairly well together but some members did not contribute or listen to other ideas.</td>
<td>The group often did not work well together and the game appeared to be the work of only 1-2 students in the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>The group put a lot of thought into making the game interesting and fun to play as shown by creative questions, game pieces and/or game board.</td>
<td>The group put some thought into making the game interesting and fun.</td>
<td>The group tried to make the game interesting and fun, but some of the things made the game more confusing.</td>
<td>Little thought was put into making the game interesting or fun.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AE – CYOBG Competition!

CREATE YOUR OWN BOARD GAME COMPETITION

Thank you to everyone who submitted a board game to our 4th annual Create Your Own Board Game competition!

We received nearly 100 submissions from 25 countries.

The winners are:

- Talk to Me (most useful language practice);
- Pick n' Win by Choon Kangseok from Ghana

https://americanenglish.state.gov/create-your-own-board-game-competition
Most Useful Language Practice: Pick ‘n Win
Most Interesting Game Concept: What Would They Say?
Best Design: Which is the One and Why?
Best Board Game by Students:
Escape the Snake
Webinar Recap

• We talked about why games are a great way to practice grammar.

• We showed you many examples of games you can use in your classroom.

• We gave you some ideas for creating your own board games or having students create their own games.
Thank you!

americanenglishwebinars.com
americanenglish.state.gov
facebook.com/AmericanEnglishatState
facebook.com/AmericanEnglishforEducators