



AE TEACHER'S CORNER FEBRUARY 2020

Most teachers would agree that games are a great way to engage students and add a little fun to the English language classroom. Playing games motivates students and helps them build positive relationships, especially if learners are working toward a common goal as part of a team. Additionally, when students are playing a game, they often worry less about making mistakes and are more willing to take risks with the language in order to achieve the game's objectives.

Some games need a lot of materials, instructions, and preparation, but there are many games that are easy to implement and require only a few standard classroom items and minimal (or no) work ahead of time. This Teacher's Corner article will share two games that can be repeatedly used to review or practice a variety of language concepts and vocabulary. The first activity can also be adapted to use with many standard textbook exercises or multiple-choice questions to make them more fun and engaging.

ACTIVITY 1: PICK A SEAT



Materials: classroom chairs; paper or chalkboard/whiteboard; tape; pre-selected vocabulary words, statements, or questions (Textbook or workbook exercises that are already made can easily be used with this activity.)

Objective: Be the first to sit down in the correct chair.

Instructions for play:

1. Choose a concept that can be reviewed or practiced by giving students a choice between two options such as true/false, yes/no, or option 1/option 2. (See “Suggested Uses” below.)
2. Place two chairs in the front of the classroom or in an area free from obstructions. Mark each chair with one of the answer options, either by using clearly visible labels or by writing the labels on the board above each chair.
3. Split the class into two teams. Teams can either line up or send up one player from each team at a time.
4. Position the first pair of students (one student from each team) so that they are both an equal distance away from the two chairs. The distance can be marked by placing tape on the floor if needed.
5. When the first pair of students is in place and ready, read a statement or question.
6. Students respond to the statement or question by being the first to sit in the chair that corresponds with the correct answer.
7. A point is awarded to the team whose player sits in the correct chair first.
8. Repeat the process until all students have had a chance to play or until all of the concepts have been reviewed.

Extensions:

1. Require the seated student to explain or justify their answer choice to earn an additional point.
2. If an incorrect answer is chosen, allow the opposing team member to explain why the answer is incorrect to earn a point for their team.

Suggested Uses:

- **Vocabulary:** Label the chairs *true* and *false*. Review words that students have studied by saying “True or false? The word _____ means _____.” Or, use the word in a sentence (correctly or incorrectly) and then say “True or false? The word _____ is used correctly in the sentence.” This could also be used to practice facts or review events from a text.
- **Grammar:** Label chairs *correct* and *incorrect*. Vary between reading sentences with correct and incorrect grammar (verb tenses, pronouns, word order, etc.) and ask students to determine if the sentences are correct or incorrect and explain why.
- **Parts of Speech:** Label each of the chairs with a different part of speech. You can either call out single words and ask students to determine the part of speech, or say “In this sentence, the word _____ is what part of speech?” before reading a sentence.
- **Two-Choice Questions:** Label chairs 1 and 2. A variety of concepts can be practiced by asking students to distinguish which sentence or example is correct (“Which sentence is correct? Number 1 or 2?”) Appropriate usage of vocabulary, verbs, adjectives, superlatives, or prepositions are just a few ideas.
- **Multiple-choice Questions:** Label up to four chairs *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D*. For this variation, it is advised that you require the competing students to listen to all of the answer choices (for instance, A–D) and then give a signal by saying “Go!” before they try to move to the correct chair.

Variation for large classes:

- This game can be used many times and in various ways with the same learners. If you have a large class, you can make the competition ongoing for the duration of

your course. To do this, divide the class into two teams and list all of the names of the students on each team. As students from each team participate, place a check mark next to their name on the team list. Every time you use this game in class, refer to the list and choose the next players from each team so that everyone has a chance to participate. You can post each team's points somewhere in the classroom and continue to add points each time you play. If desired, you can offer an incentive to the winning team at the end of the course, or once a specific number of points are earned.

ACTIVITY 2: GUESS THE WORD



Materials: timer; classroom chairs; chalkboard/whiteboard; pre-selected vocabulary words or categories that students are familiar with

Objective: Be the first to correctly guess a vocabulary word.

Instructions for play:

1. Let students know the topic or category of the words that will be used during the game. For instance, tell students if you are playing the game to review vocabulary from a recent unit about clothing, or if you will be focused on a particular category like sports.
2. Place two chairs in front of the chalkboard or whiteboard, far enough away so that a person sitting in the chair cannot see what is written on the board behind them. There should also be as much space as possible between the two chairs.
3. Split the class into two teams and have students gather with their teammates on opposite sides of the board, in front of one of the chairs.
4. Have each team select one member to sit in the chair.

5. Write a vocabulary word from the prepared list on the board between the two chairs.
6. Set a timer for 1–2 minutes, depending on how long you think your students will need.
7. When you give a signal, each team must try to help their seated teammate guess the vocabulary word that is written on the board by giving clues or using gestures. Students may not say the word, any variations (such as singular/plural forms, or different tenses), or any part of the word (such as root words). If they do, their team loses a point.
8. Teams earn a point for each word guessed correctly.
9. If the word is not guessed before the allotted time runs out, the word can be used again later in the game with different students in the chairs.
10. Continue until all of the words on the list have been guessed correctly.

Extensions:

1. Ask the seated student to correctly use the vocabulary word in a sentence to earn an additional point.
2. Require the seated student to spell the word correctly to earn an additional point.

Variations:

1. Play the game in reverse by revealing the vocabulary words only to the students at the front of the class. Next, the students at the front give clues to their teammates who then try to guess the word. The first team to guess correctly earns a point. (You may want to increase the physical separation between teams for this variation.)
2. For large classes, the class can be divided into smaller sections and two teams formed within each section. The same procedures can be followed, with one student taking on the role of the teacher and only revealing the vocabulary word to those students who will be giving clues. Instead of using the board, the vocabulary words can be written on index cards or slips of paper. Or the same large-class variation noted in the previous game can be used. This game can be used many times with different words, and the competition can continue for the duration of a course.

You can motivate students in your English classes to practice language concepts using these simple yet engaging games. Both activities can easily be adapted for use with a variety of content and do not require much preparation. They are fun and effective activities to use for last-minute review or practice or to incorporate as part of your regular classroom routine.

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This article was written by contributing author Amy Hanna for AE Teacher's Corner.

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