

TWO ACTIVE VERB TENSE GAMES

Games that get learners out of their seats moving around are not only fun, but also appeal to different learning styles. This week, we present two games that can be used to practice verb tenses in active ways that create memorable learning experiences for students.

SENTENCE RELAY

Skills: This game can be used to practice a specific verb tense or to review several tenses at the same time. Students also practice syntax and writing during this activity.

Materials:

- Paper slips with a noun, verb, and tense (if playing for mixed review) written on each one
- Two or three containers to hold the slips of paper (one for each team)
- Chalk/markers and a chalk/whiteboard, or paper and pencils for each team

How to Play:

1. If desired, have students brainstorm a list of nouns and verbs (in the infinitive) to use in the game. The list can also be created by the teacher ahead of time. Record one noun and one verb on each slip of paper. If you plan to practice multiple tenses, write a tense for students to use on each slip.
2. Mix up the slips and divide them evenly amongst the containers for each team. There should be at least one slip of paper per student, but there can be extras.
3. Divide the class into two or three equal teams. Make sure that students know the person from each team who will start the relay, and the order in which other students will follow.
4. The game is a relay during which each team competes to send one person at a time up to the front of the room to write grammatically correct sentences the fastest. The first person comes up to the board or paper where sentences are being recorded, reaches into the container, and chooses a slip. Then, they must write a sentence using the noun and verb, in designated tense, on their team's paper or the board.
5. The student should keep the slip for their sentence and return to their team. They can high five the first person to signal that they can then move to the board to write the next sentence. No one should move until they have gotten a high five from the returning team member.

6. This continues until everyone on the team has had a chance to write a sentence. Teams can earn two points for finishing first, or one point for finishing in second place.
7. Sentences must be checked for accuracy. If only one tense is being practiced, teams can trade sentences and check each other's. If multiple tenses are being practiced, the whole class can check them together. Have each student read what was on his/her slip of paper aloud and then the class can check the sentence they wrote for accuracy.
8. Teams can earn one point for each correct sentence. Add any points awarded for fast finishers and the team with the most points wins!

WHAT DID HE/SHE DO?

Skills: This game can be used to practice the past tense of irregular verbs. Students also practice speaking and listening during this activity.

Materials:

- Paper slips with an irregular verb (infinitive) written on each one
- A container to hold the slips of paper
- Paper and pencils for each team

How to Play:

1. If you have beginner students or feel it is necessary, review the past tense of the irregular verbs you plan to use for the game before you start.
2. Divide the class into small groups of three to five students. Have the groups sit so that everyone can see the front of the classroom and can whisper ideas without other groups overhearing the discussion. Assign each group a name or allow each team to choose one.
3. Depending on how many irregular verbs you have, and the size of your class, the "actors" can be chosen in different ways. Each team can elect a representative actor or two who will get to act out one verb at the front of the class. Or, each team member can be assigned a number and the teacher can randomly call a team name and number to come up to act out a verb. Students can also volunteer to be the actors.
4. Once an actor is chosen, the student should come up to the front of the room and choose a random slip of paper from the container. They will silently read the verb and perform the action.

For instance, if the verb is “bite” the actor would pretend to bite something without making a sound or saying anything.

5. Teams of students must observe the actor and quietly confer about what they believe he or she did. Each team needs to agree on how to use the past tense of the irregular verb in a sentence to describe the person’s actions. Sentences should be numbered as the game progresses. For example if the verb acted out was “bite”, students could write something like “1: Julisa bit an apple” on their paper. The teacher should keep a list of what each actor does so that sentences can be checked for accuracy at the end of the game.
6. Once all of the verbs have been acted out, teams should exchange papers. The teacher can call on different groups to tell which verb they guessed and read the sentence with the correct past tense form. Each group should check the sentences they have for accuracy and note any errors.
7. One point is awarded for each sentence containing the irregular verb correctly used in past tense. Teams with the most points win.

Both of the activities described this week engage students in creative and physically active grammar practice. Using these activities will allow students to apply grammar skills in an authentic and memorable way. For more active games, try [Cops and Robbers: We Were Watching a Movie at the Movie Theater](#) from a past Teacher’s Corner or [Teaching Techniques: Running for Your Words](#) from *English Teaching Forum*.