

VOCABULARY RACE

Making traditional classroom tasks and activities into games can be a fun way to get students moving and practicing language and to nudge them out of their routines. Many of the tasks and activities teachers already use for class need only to be adapted slightly for the lesson to be more active and make a lasting impression on students.

In this week's Teacher's Corner, we will learn about a vocabulary activity turned into a race. During each round, students will step up to answer a question while their team members help with finding the correct answer. The first team to come up with the correct answer earns a point. The competitive nature of this race encourages students to work together quickly to find answers, and the excitement of the movement around the classroom motivates students to participate. It's a fun and easy activity to use for teaching new material or reviewing previous material.

LEVEL

Beginning and above

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Listening
Vocabulary

GOALS

During this activity, students will be able to:

- Identify target vocabulary words by definitions
- Cooperate with classmates to find correct answers

MATERIALS

- List of vocabulary words and matching definitions

- Enough chalk or markers for students to write on the board

PREPARATION

- Divide students into groups of six

PROCEDURE

1. Tell students that in this activity they are going to work in teams to identify vocabulary words. The activity is a game where students will race against other teams to answer questions and score points. Every team member will participate in identifying new words while teammates offer help to earn points.
2. Place students into their groups, and warm up the teams with some practice.
 - a. Direct the teams to separate parts of the room so that each team has some space.
 - b. Explain that they will practice within their teams before starting the game.
 - c. Tell students that they will hear a definition of a word, and as a group they must identify the matching vocabulary word. Students can work with team members to discuss the definition to choose the correct word as a team.
 - i. For example, the teacher gives the definition: “A person who takes orders in a restaurant while you are seated at a table.” Students will then work together to come up with the word *server*.
 - d. The groups have 30-60 seconds to come up with the answer.
 - e. Practice this process a few times with several different vocabulary words.
3. Gather the students’ attention, and review the rules of the game.
 - a. Tell students that each team will stand in a group and will choose one teammate to be ready to run to the board.

- b. The teacher will give a definition, and the teammate who has been selected must work with the group to identify the correct word and then race to the board to write the answer correctly.
- c. The first team to identify the word and correctly write it on the board will earn a point.
- d. Only the teammate chosen to go to the board for the round can write on the board. The other teammates must remain with the group but can talk to and shout out help to their teammate at the board.
- e. The next round is conducted in the same way, but a new teammate is chosen to go to the board. Each teammate must have a turn before a student can have a second turn to run up to the board.
- f. The game ends either when the teacher runs out of words or when a team reaches a certain number of points and wins.

VARIATIONS

There are a number of ways to adapt this activity to meet your classroom's needs. First, this activity can be used for students to practice or review grammar or even sentences. Second, you can choose how big or small the teams should be to fit the space of your classroom.

One variation is to conduct the game between two teams at lightning speed with a five-minute time limit. Each team lines up and the person first in line goes first. The teacher says the definition, and the first student on each team must race to the board to write the word. Once one student writes the word correctly, the teacher says "switch," and the students race to the back of the lines. The next students at the front of the lines listen for the next definition and race to write the word on the board. The team



members can shout out help to their teammate at the board. Continue to do this for five minutes, or until everyone has had a chance to write on the board. Keep score, and the team with the most points wins.