

# Games and Activities

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## Keeping Children Engaged in the Primary ESL Classroom

### Introduction

Even capable, experienced teachers can run out of ideas to keep their lessons fresh and engaging. And of course younger teachers are always keen to hear about new ideas to motivate their students. This workshop is a sharing of ideas. It is hoped participants will apply these ideas to their own personality and style of teaching.

### Materials Required

These activities are all designed to use minimal resources. Of course general teaching resources – black/white board and chalk/pens, general stationary materials, paper etc. should be available. Some of these activities will require a few more materials.

### Procedure

The process for this workshop is as follows:

- Firstly participants will be presented with some very important **basic principles** which they need to pay careful attention to and remember.
- Secondly some **specific examples** will be given, and participants will have a chance to use and experience these from the perspective of students in the classroom.
- Thirdly participants will be asked to apply these principles to **designing an activity** that will suit their particular situation. Participants need to visualise themselves actually using the activity in their own classroom in their own way.
- Finally participants are encouraged to **discuss** their ideas with others teaching in similar situations and ask questions or give each other ideas and suggestions.

## A: PRINCIPLES - What are the elements of a good game or activity?

Your personality will shine through in everything you do. If you try to be someone other than who you are you may well come across as dishonest and you will quickly exhaust yourself with the effort.

Nevertheless there are principles and factors which you can become aware of and make use of, adapting them to suit your own personality and developing them with your own creativity. A teacher who is aware of the elements listed here can create or adapt any situation to design an engaging activity or game.

### 1. Surprise!

Children enjoy a surprise. They love the *anticipation* of something special. In the classroom we add the element of surprise by incorporating something:

- .....
- or .....

Some situations or places where this element can be applied well are:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

If the game is suitably random, clearly it is possible for anyone to win – but it is still worth trying hard and they can still feel proud of winning.

### 2. A challenge

Children are often amazed by their own growth and development and the changes in their own bodies. They love to discover how much bigger and cleverer they are becoming. They enjoy challenges – as long as they are not too far out of reach. (However, there are some children who don't seem to notice that a challenge may be too steep!)

Children like to compete:

- against .....
- against .....
- as part of .....
- .....

However, there should really be no possibility of .....  
If they lose this time.....

### 3. A Reward

In many cases and for many children, simply completing the challenge is reward enough. But it is fun to also receive rewards such as:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- ..... , ..... or .....
- .....
- .....

#### IMPORTANT:

1. Giving rewards needs to be ..... – don't start something that becomes too difficult (or expensive!) to continue.
2. Rewards must be seen as '.....' and genuinely earned. (E.g. rewarding a naughty child for behaving well for once can be effective, but other children who behave well all the time may feel cheated.) However a reward that is given randomly (such as a lottery) can be seen as acceptable.
3. Different children have different '.....' and are motivated by different rewards.

According to research the five love languages are:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

## B: PRINCIPLES - Designing and creating games and activities

Teachers are busy people, with an overloaded nook in the teacher's room, and a head full of stuff they are putting off for when they have a 'free' moment. So *no one* has time for creating magnificent teaching aids and activities.

So, firstly, the **materials** you use need to be:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- ..... or  
.....

And the **time** you take to prepare it:

- The game must be .....

*(Is this possible? We will look at some specific ideas!)*

### 1. Designing a game to play in the classroom

The first rule to remember is:

#### KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Avoid:

- Complicated .....
- Complicated .....
- Complicated .....

#### Make sure everybody can play

How? .....

.....

#### Work yourself out of a job

How? .....

.....

*(We will look at some specific ideas for games in the classroom.)*

## 2. Try something a little bit different

There is a standard style of teaching in many primary school classrooms:

*Teacher speaks loudly (shouts) – children respond (shout) ... repeat*

Quite apart from the possible damage to vocal chords and ear drums, it is monotonous and boring. Why not add some variety, improve learning and save everyone's sanity?

### Sing, don't shout!

**Why?** Well, briefly:

- .....
- .....
- Recent brain research tells us  
.....  
.....
- Singing is also naturally .....
- AND it's more .....

### Add variety to drilling

As well as singing, when you are drilling, find other ways to say it – different ....., different ....., aimed .....

For example:

- .....
- say it to .....
- say it to the ....., the ....., the ....., your .....
- close your eyes and .....
- ..... and say it
- put your hands ..... and say it
- ..... while saying it
- click your ....., tap your ..... ..

### Use rhythm and movement

This can make all the difference to drilling, and to any other part of the lesson – make it ..... instead of ....., and ..... better in their minds.

### Give them something to do with their hands

Children need to keep their hands busy.

Think of a .....

## SPECIFIC IDEAS – Surprise!

### Everybody loves a lottery

It is often hard to choose specific children to have a turn or attempt a task by themselves. We can ask for volunteers but they are 'shy', or they don't want to show off in front of their classmates. We can choose someone but it's hard to be 'fair' and not pick on children we suspect don't know it, or children we are sure do know it ... or whatever reason we may have.

There are many ways of performing a lottery to choose participants.

- Paper or card with.....
  - In a phonics lesson.....
  - In a speaking and listening lesson.....
  - Numbers, dates, or times.....
- Children choose.....
- Children's names.....
- Using LCD projector.....

Dice.....

.....

Playing cards.....

### Fun with Pairs and Groups

Finding a partner or group before playing a game is a great opportunity for some informal language practice.

NOTE: the first time they do this, children will naturally be a little uneasy/shy/reticent. You - the teacher - be strong and determined, kind and firm, and help them get going! Maybe even make it into a race or competition so that they feel a little bit pressured to hurry up and find their group first. (Don't give up and say they can't!)

- Starting with a card (as above).....
- Ask children to line up according to height.....
- Ask children to find other children.....
- Ask the children to think of.....
- Children write their name on a scrap of paper.....

## Question Surprise

When you are playing a quiz-type game, especially as a practice exercise, the children wait nervously to find out which question will be theirs.

List of questions.....

Children running the game.....

## BINGO!

A good example of Question Surprise is the game of BINGO! Here is one way to play:

Go to the website: .....

At the end of your lesson: .....

NOTE: There is also a version using pictures. The trick here is.....

.....

When you click '**continue**' you will be asked.....

.....

The '**text**' is.....

The '**clue**' is.....

For example: .....

Click '.....' each time.

When you have entered your 25 words you click '**continue**'.

You now need to choose..... Click '**continue**'.

Print your cards.....

**Playing the game** – so that the game can be played multiple times.....

Tell them.....

How do they WIN? .....

.....

Winners can.....

Other ideas: .....

## Points Surprise

Here is a favourite game where teams of children answer a question and are rewarded with some points – but they have to ‘choose’ their points, and it could be any number or even something else. They are still being rewarded for a right answer (and no reward for a wrong answer) but it is so random that any team can win.

### “Typhoon”

This game can be prepared and played.....

1. On the board.....

2. On a piece of paper.....

.....

.....

3. Teams: .....

4. Questions: .....

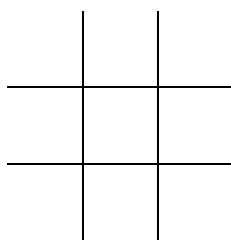
**Playing the Game**.....

.....

*If the game is progressing slowly*.....

### Tic Tac Toe

.....



.....

### Blackboard Soccer

For those who are keen on sports, the game on the board can be set up like a sports game, or a race.  
For soccer:

You need.....



A 'ball' that.....

Play.....

A 'Race' game.....

The rules.....

## SPECIFIC IDEAS – A Challenge

Think of those ‘superlative’ (‘----est’) adjectives. Challenge children to be or do the

- most
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

“Let’s see who (which individual, pair, or group) can ...”

This can be applied to any activity, even drilling, and even a boring worksheet, but not necessarily in the same way ever time. Give them a little surprise by what you ask for!

“*This* time I want to see

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

## SPECIFIC IDEAS: A Reward

The teacher's ..... and ..... of encouragement, and ..... (a '.....' or a '.....') are the cheapest, easiest, and often most effective rewards.

The **absence** of ..... is a reward for some children.

Even if their work is not as perfect as we (or they) would like to see, .....

..... can be like gold to a frustrated child.

**A**..... – especially for the child who is feeling ignored and unloved – is worth more than any gift. A child who is unattractive to us because of being physically untidy or dirty (probably not their fault) can be desperate for some attention. Some children who are attention-starved respond by withdrawing into themselves. Others behave badly just to be noticed.

**R**.....

Children like to feel important; they like to feel that they are actually *helping* the teacher too. So giving them a task can be a reward too.

- Whoever wins a round of BINGO! .....
- When a child is answering well, ask them to .....
- When a child has finished quickly and neatly, they could .....
- A child who is sitting nicely could come up the front and .....
- A child who keeps 'winning' could be asked to .....