



## Games for Language Learning: Make the Learning Fun and Memorable

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# Games in the Language Classroom

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Games are an integral part of a constructive interactive language learning environment. By incorporating games into your students' learning experience, you not only encourage engaged participation, but also awaken their competitive spirits as a means to building stronger comprehension.

Games can be designed to reach many different goals. Some are created as a way to review information already taught, some are designed to provide rehearsal for a new linguistic skill, and still others provoke thought in the language and require students to use what they know to apply their language learning to content area based games.

Sometimes simple classroom manipulatives or everyday materials can be used in a number of ways to create games that will challenge, encourage, and excite learners.

Sample games:

BIG DICE - Use these fun and funky manipulatives many ways. Here are three suggestions:

1. More and less - Students can practice the concepts and linguistic patterns for more than and less than using the dice in pairs. Each time the dice are rolled, partners must say in the target language, " \_\_\_\_\_ is more than/less than \_\_\_\_\_"
2. Who wins? - Using a bowl of beans, coins, prizes, or any other type of manipulative, students take turns rolling and counting out the number of items they roll. Total them once all items are gone to determine who wins.
3. Mathematics - Depending on the age and knowledge base your students have, do a math race. Have the students work in teams to roll the dice and add to see which team reaches 100 first. Each person to go must add their number on out loud in the target language and announce the number they have reached.

Matching games - These are an extremely valuable old standby, however, it is important to use these not only as vocabulary builders, but also as communicative skill enhancers.

4. Weather forecast - Challenge your students to put the weather forecast together by matching the pictures with the proper days and weather words. This can be done with younger students with the teacher facilitating by reading the words for each day page. Once it is put together the students can act it out as though they were

doing a forecast for t.v. This activity can be extended to create a whole newscast by also incorporating putting a story in order and even including a sports report.

5. Questions and Answers - This is a review game that is based on the idea that students need to be able to use the language to communicate ideas. By putting questions on strips of paper and their corresponding answers on another, literate learners can match them either individually on a table or in a more kinesthetic way. Each student receives a question or an answer at random and has to go around to classmates and read theirs back and forth until they find their match. A variation on this game for younger learners would be to ask a question and provide pictures that would correspond to answers. Students could take turns figuring out which answer is correct.

**\*\* Bonus - Conversation Relay** Another way to play with questions and answers is by doing a conversation relay in which each student has a question and their partners must respond before they can turn and ask the next student.

6. Survivor Spanish/French/German/Chinese... Students take part in three activities as a team or individually to keep their "torches" lit and survive the challenge. Each one can require a different skill (a puzzle or a game) that must be completed correctly before moving on to the next part. This can include any one of the games previously mentioned, but here are some suggestions:

1. matching thematic books to season names

2. creating a specific pattern of colors that

needs to be read aloud to the guide (teacher)

3. Listening to a description of clothing and dressing up a paper doll in the correct combination. (This can be read live or provided with a listening device like an ipod or cd.)

7. Scavenger Hunt - Depending on your location, create a group of items that need to be found by each team (could be 2-4 per group). You may want to vary the items to make it impossible to cheat. If your students can read, write the list, otherwise it can be an audio list for younger learners. With younger learners you may want to do this as a whole group activity. Here are some examples of items to find:

- a. something red and round

- b. three yellow triangles

- c. a book shaped like a square

- d. white stars, red stripes, and white stripes

8. Follow the Directions - This is a great way to get your students involved in using language for a purpose. Prior to this activity, students should learn words and phrases about right, left, turn, and straight. This can be extended for older or more advanced learners to include cardinal directions and the idea of using a compass. Teacher should hide stars or another item that can be discovered by each student. Younger students should do this individually but in a whole group setting. Older students can work in pairs or small groups. Directions for younger students should be no longer than three steps.

9. Recycling race - Earth friendly lessons support social studies objectives and are a great way to encourage ecological awareness in your students. Do this activity in the target language with a recycling race. Each team has a pile of materials (paper, plastic, cans, and cardboard). When you say go; a member from each team must pick an item and say what it is. Then he/she must run to place it in the correct box at the other end of the room which will have a picture and a word to signify what its contents should be. After each student goes, they must announce to their team members (in the target language), "I recycled; now you can help." The first team to finish correctly wins. This can be more challenging if you place a picture of an item that has been made by recycling on the bins.

10. All About Me - This is a great singing game. You can do it with a bouncing ball or just with a rhythm of clapping hands. Each student gets a chance to tell about themselves. It can be silly if they know the words. Practice these ideas individually prior to playing this so each student feels comfortable.

Hola me llamo Amanda y me gusta bailar

Yo tengo 8 años y un hermano. ¡Mucho gusto!

Konnichi wa. Watashi wa Amanda desu.

8sai desu. Hitori no ototto imasu ne. Hajimemashite!

Bonjour je m'appelle Amanda et j'aime chanter.

J'ai 8 ans et seule un frère. Enchantée!

11. **Build a Song or video** - students divide into groups and choose a topic and a tune to create their own learning song or video. Have a contest or show!

12. **THUMBALL** - These incredible manipulatives can drastically enhance the energy and enthusiasm of your students and help you achieve great learning results. Order them online at [www.thumball.com](http://www.thumball.com)