

## An Introduction to Teacher Development

### Programme 2: Games in the classroom – teacher support worksheet

#### What are the benefits of using games in the classroom?

Games can be used as a quick warm up activity to start the class, as a way to help shy students ‘come out of themselves’ and start speaking English without fear, and as a way of giving demotivated students, especially bored teenagers, a reason to engage with English.

In this programme we hear about five different games, and the benefits of playing them with students.

As with most effective games, for **Who am I?** you **don’t need special resources**, but you do need **careful management and preparation** in advance. **Hintsä**, from Ethiopia, describes how he prepares for it:

*‘(At home) I write on slips of paper, the names of celebrities, could be dead or alive, politicians; sportsmen ... women ... all kinds of people and then (I bring those things to class) and paste them on the back of my students. Two students come out, stand before the whole class and they don’t see what is pasted on their back.’*

The two students each face the class and ask questions to discover their new identities. They can only ask ‘yes/no’ questions, so it is a process of elimination.

Who am I? and a similar game 20 questions practise question forms and useful vocabulary. These games are very entertaining, and students enjoy the competitive element.

‘**Last letter**’ is designed to help with spelling. **Shiva**, a teacher from India, explains

*‘The students are divided into two groups. First student, for example, says “class”. The next group begins with a word beginning with “s”, so he says “shoe”, then the other group with “e”.’*

In **Last letter** someone in group A starts, and then a student in group B continues. So after ‘shoe’ [S.H.O.E.] a student in group A needs a word beginning with E, for example ‘ever’ [E.V.E.R.] and now a student in group B has to find a word starting with ‘r’. English spelling and pronunciation are not very regular, and ‘**Last letter**’ is a fun way to drive that message home.

To play the game called **Bingo, Eka**, from Indonesia, prepared lots of small cards, each with eight squares containing pictures of items of vocabulary (in this case weather conditions such as snow, wind, and rain). There is one **Bingo** picture card per student and the cards are identical. She hands round the cards, and every student has to tear up small paper squares, to later cover up seven of the eight pictures. Clear instructions are very important with any game and **Eka** makes sure she gives an example as well as checking her instructions are understood.

*‘We can start the game ... When I say “rainy”, for example, you have to cover the picture of “rainy”. OK? Can you do that? Ok. So ... if you cover all seven pictures with this little paper you can shout “Bingo”!’*

As the teacher calls out, each student covers up the corresponding picture with their squares of paper. They’ve only just learned these words so it isn’t as easy as it sounds! Once seven of the eight pictures are covered up, the students call out ‘Bingo’. Yes ... everyone wins this game! And to check they got it right, they have to call out the weather of the picture that’s left uncovered.

The children really love it, but it’s not only a matter of playing a fun game. **Eka** adapted a **Bingo** game to get students listening to and recognising important new vocabulary before going on to other activities.

Next, **Ball throw**, which is a short physical classroom game to practise new vocabulary. It’s great fun for younger students because it gets them running around! To play this game you need to make some big ‘flashcards’ with pictures on them, and one ball of scrunched up paper for each team. Divide the class into two teams. Put the pictures up on the board and each team lines up so that the student at the front is holding a ball. **Samira**, from Iran, says:

*‘One group tells the other group to hit a flash card, for example the orange flash card which is on the board. So, the person has to throw the ball towards the orange, so if it hits the orange it means that the group has got one point. If they cannot hit the orange, they lose the point.’*

## An Introduction to Teacher Development

After throwing the paper ball, the front student runs to the back of the team and the next one has a go. It is fast and fun and easy to adapt to any vocabulary that you want your students to practise.

**Alibi** really makes students think carefully about forming questions and answers in English. **Altaf**, from India, describes the game:

*‘Two students would be selected and accused of something, e.g. “they robbed the bank at 10.00 a.m.” Now these two students give the excuse that “yesterday at ten o’clock we were shopping at MG Road”. The teacher sends these two children outside and the whole class, who are detectives, (prepare) questions about their excuse, like, “Where were you yesterday at ten o’clock?”, “What did you buy?”, all such kinds of questions the class is going to ask.*

*‘One child comes inside the classroom. He answers all the questions. Then the second child is called. And the class ask the same set of questions. If most of the answers match then the accused are innocent. If most of the answers don’t match, they are criminals.’*

This involves a lot of thinking! It is a great way to practise correct question forms and the use of past tenses.

**Programme summary:** Playing games in the classroom introduces a bit of **competition** and **fun** and a welcome **change of pace** during your lesson. Students focus on the game and are **less shy** about using their English.

A game can be an excellent way of **revising vocabulary** or **question forms** and grammar, or even **spelling**. **Adapt games** to fit what you’re teaching, and of course the age and English level of your students.

In **big classes** putting students into **competing teams** is a very good strategy. **You don’t need special resources**, but the teacher needs to **prepare and plan in advance**, and to **give very clear instructions** and **examples**.

**Timing** is also important.

### Ask a colleague

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

---



---



---



---



---

### Over to you!

Do you know the games listed below? If you are not familiar with them, try and find out how to play them. Which of the games could you use in class? Discuss with another teacher.

- Draw the word/Pictionary™
- Stop!
- Pelmanism
- Happy families
- Noughts and crosses
- Charades
- Kim’s game
- Hangman
- I spy
- Simon says