

Game-like Activities to Practice ESL Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing

Donna Price
San Diego Community College
Continuing Education Program
dprice@sdccd.edu

Research

- Stephen Krashen: affective filter hypothesis
- Penny Ur: game-like activities
- John Comings: part of a community



Make activities game-like by:

- Giving points
- Giving a time limit
- Making it a race
- Dividing class into teams
- Giving a small prize
- Saying there will be a winner

A. Class Building Game

- 1) Two Truths and a Lie (L,S,R,W)* p. 2



B. Moving Activities

- 1) Fly Swatter Game (L,W) p. 2
- 2) Dictation Relay (L,S,R,W) p. 2
- 3) Scrambled Questions (L,S,R,W) p. 2
- 4) Conversation Cards (L,S) p. 3
- 5) Student Interview (L,S,W) p. 4



C. Group Seated Activities

- 2) Unscramble (L,S,R) p. 5

D. Dice Games

- 1) Questions (L,S) p. 6 Template p. 7
- 2) Vocabulary Dice Game (L,S) p. 8



Common Activities Made More Game-Like

- 1) Crossword puzzle (It's a race--which pair can solve the puzzle the quickest?)
- 2) Word scramble (The group that unscrambles the words the fastest wins!)
- 3) Word search (The first pair who solves the word search wins! Winners discuss vocabulary while others are finishing.)

*L = Listening, S = Speaking, R = Reading, W = Writing

Two Truths and a Lie

Procedure:

- 1) Tell your students two truths and a lie.
- 2) In pairs/small groups, students decide which statements are true and which one is a lie.
- 3) Share the answer.
- 4) Students write two truths and one lie on a piece of paper.
- 5) Students read their two truths and one lie to their partners or to the whole group.
- 6) The partner/group guesses the answer.

from 50 Stimulating Classroom Activities

Fly Swatter Game

Procedure:

- 1) Write 10-15 irregular past tense verbs on the board.
- 2) Divide the class into two groups. Have the students line up into two groups.
- 3) Hand the front person of each group a fly swatter. Give the simple present of a verb.
- 4) The front person of each group finds the irregular verb on the board and hits it with the fly swatter.
- 5) The person who hits it first wins a point for their team. Each person should hand the fly swatter to the next person in line.
- 6) The team with the most points wins.

from 50 Stimulating Classroom Starters

Dictation Relay

Procedure:

- 1) Teacher posts a list of words or sentences on the wall in several places.
 - 2) Student are divided into groups of 4.
 - 3) One member of each group (the runner) goes to the wall to read the word or sentence. The other group members stay seated.
 - 4) The runners must then walk back to the group and dictate what they read to their group--no yelling! If necessary, the runner goes back to the wall to check.
 - 5) Students take turn being the runner.
 - 6) Students check each others' papers as they write or at the end.
 - 7) The first to complete all the words or sentences accurately wins.
- (Variation: #1 = runner, #2 = repeater, #3 = checker, #4 = reader)

from 50 Stimulating Classroom Starters

Scrambled Questions

Procedure:

- 1) Teacher writes each word from a question on a separate piece of large paper.
- 2) Teacher says a sentence. Students think of the question. This must be a review of questions and answers that have been studied.
- 3) Students make a line in front of the class holding up their papers in the correct order of the question.
- 4) Or, students make a line in front of the class in scrambled order and the students who are seated direct the movement of each student holding a word.

Lesson **C** *What are you doing right now?*

Conversation cards

- A** Everyone takes a card.
- B** Find a classmate. Ask your question. Your classmate answers. Change cards.
- C** Find another classmate. Ask your new question. Your classmate answers. Change cards again.

What are you wearing today?	What are you doing right now?	What do you do every Sunday?	What do you drink every morning?
What do you usually eat for dinner?	What do you do every afternoon?	What do you usually wear to class?	What am I wearing today?
What is the teacher doing right now?	What time do you usually go to bed?	What do you usually do after class?	What do you do every day?
What do you usually do every night?	What do you usually watch on TV?	What do you usually do on Friday?	What is the teacher wearing today?

Writing**Student interview****A** Talk to your classmates. Complete the chart.**A** Maria, can you drive?**B** Yes, I can.

	Names
1. Find a student who can drive.	<i>Maria</i> _____
2. Find a student who can cook.	_____
3. Find a student who can read a bus schedule.	_____
4. Find a student who can't type.	_____
5. Find a student who can build things.	_____
6. Find a student who can speak three languages.	_____
7. Find a student who can paint a house.	_____
8. Find a student who can't use a computer.	_____

B Write sentences about your classmates.1. Maria can drive.

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

Lesson **D** Reading

Unscramble

- A** Work with a partner. Cut out the strips. Mix them up. Put the story in the correct order.
B Then answer the questions.

1. What is Adela's goal? _____
2. What does Adela need to study? _____
3. What is the last thing Adela will do? _____

1) My name is Adela Leon.
My goal is to become a nurse.
I need to take three steps to become a nurse.
First, I need to learn more English.
I will do my English homework and practice every night.
Second, I need to go to nursing school.
I will need to study hard in nursing school.
Third, I need to find a good nursing job.
I know I can do it!

Questions Board Game

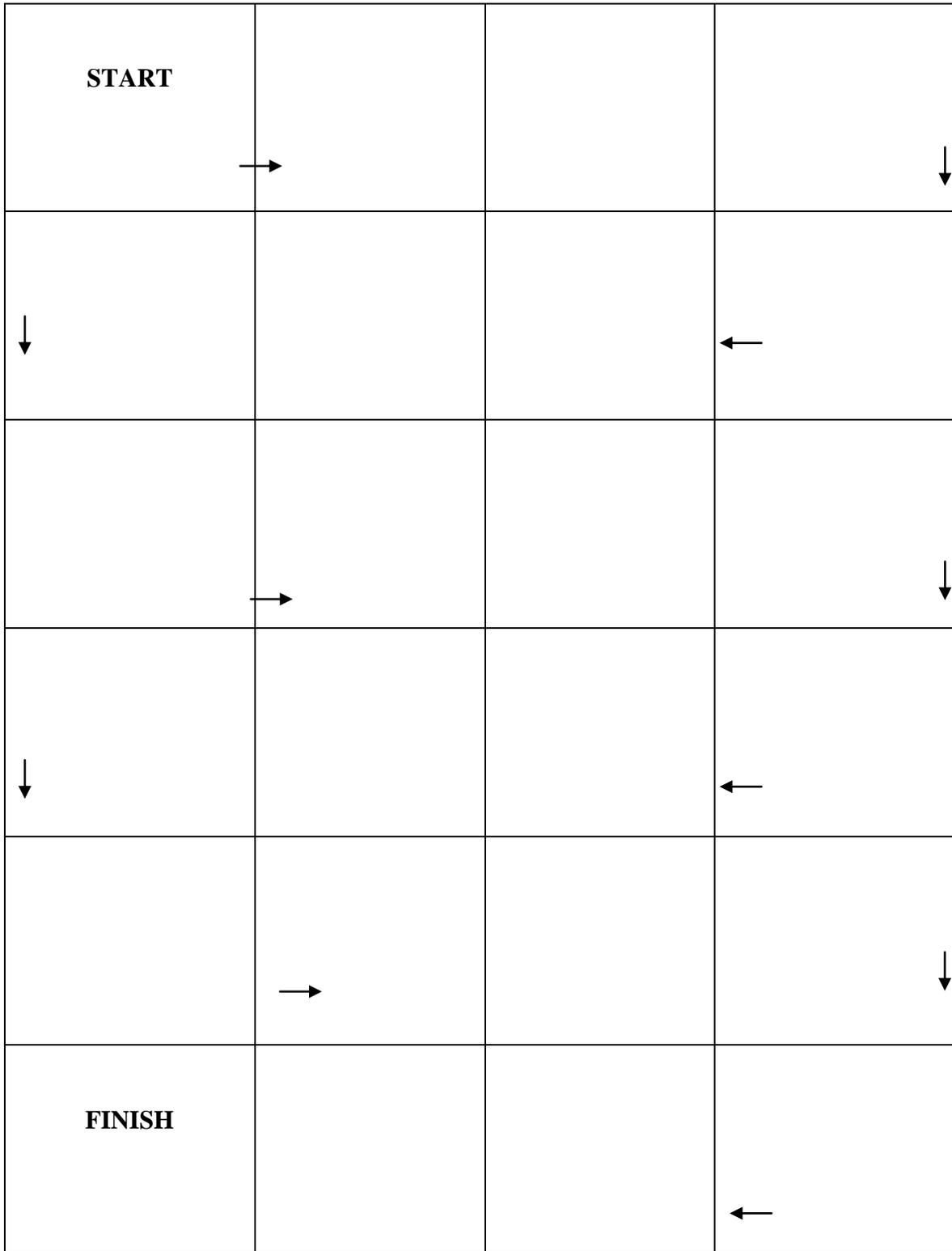
Procedure:

- 1) 2-4 students put markers on the start. In groups, take turns rolling the die. The person with the highest number begins.
- 2) Roll the die again. Student moves the marker to the correct place. Student reads the question out loud and answers it.
- 3) Student gives the die to the person sitting on the right. The person who gets to the finish first wins!

START	What do you like to do in your free time? →	How many cups of coffee do you drink a day?	What do you like to watch on TV? ↓
How often do you go to the cinema? ↓	How often do you have English classes?	Where do you eat your breakfast at home?	Where do you go for walks? ←
Where do you go shopping?	What do you like to eat? →	Where does your best friend live?	Where do you go during the weekends? ↓
Where do you go for holidays? ↓	What do you do on Friday nights?	How do you get to school?	How often do you wash your hair? ←
What clothes do you like to wear for school?	How often do you see your friends? →	What time do you get up on Sunday mornings?	How many hours do you work every day? ↓
FINISH	Where do you work?	Where do you go to relax?	How much time do you take to do your homework? ←

from 50 Stimulating Classroom Activities

Board Game Template



Vocabulary Dice Game

Procedure:

- 1) Teacher makes handout with instructions on what each number on the die means.
- 2) Teacher makes vocabulary cards.
- 3) Divide the class into groups.
- 4) Give each group a die and instruction paper.
- 5) Go over the instructions and give an example.
- 6) Students take turns tossing the die. Then they take a vocabulary card. Depending on their die, they have to either:
 - 1 on the die: act it out
 - 2 on the die: draw a picture of the word
 - 3 on the die: create a sentence using the vocabulary word
 - 4 on the die: create a question to ask the group using the vocabulary word
 - 5 on the die: explain the vocabulary word w/o using the actual word and the group guesses the word.
 - 6 on the die: student chooses between 1-5.

from 50 Stimulating Classroom Activities

Extra Moving Activity:

Give One, Get One

Procedure:

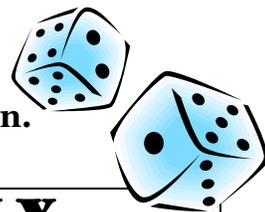
- 1) Ask students to individually start a list (something you have been studying in class), such as:
 - things found in the classroom
 - activities done over the weekend
 - names of food
- 2) After a few minutes ask students to compare their lists to a classmate's list.
- 3) Comparing their lists, they must give an item not on their classmate's list and take an item they didn't have on their own list.
- 4) After giving and getting ideas, students move on to other classmates.
- 5) Rewards can be given for the longest lists.

from Kagen and 50 Stimulating Classroom Starters

Extra Dice Game:

Roll the Dice Conversation Practice

Roll the dice once; find the category below. Roll the dice a second time, and find the specific question # in that category. Talk about the question.



<p style="text-align: center;">1 PERSONAL INFORMATION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What's your last name?2. Where are you from?3. What's your zip code?4. What's your address?5. When is your birthday?6. What's your area code?	<p style="text-align: center;">2 FAMILY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How many people are in your family?2. Are you married or single?3. Who do you live with?4. How many sisters do you have?5. How many brothers do you have?6. Do you have any nieces or nephews?
<p style="text-align: center;">3 HEALTH</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What do you do when you have a headache?2. Why do people sometimes get a backache?3. What do you take if you have a stomachache?4. What do you take if you have a sore throat?5. Do you eat a healthy breakfast? What do you eat?6. What exercise do you like to do?	<p style="text-align: center;">5 COMMUNITY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Where do you buy stamps?2. Where do you wash your clothes?3. Where do you buy food?4. What is the address of your school?5. Where do children play?6. Why did you decide to come to this city?
<p style="text-align: center;">4 EDUCATION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How did you learn about this school?2. How long have you been studying here?3. What do you want to do after you complete this class?4. Do you like to read? What do you read outside of class?5. Is there a training program near your school?6. Do you speak English outside of class? If yes, who do you speak to?	<p style="text-align: center;">6 WORK & TRAVEL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do you want a full-time job or a part-time job? Why?2. What job do you want to have?3. Do you like using the computer? What do you do on the computer?4. What job did you have in your country?5. Did you work in this country? What did you do?6. Do you have any skills? Give two examples.

Useful Phrases

Games Phrases

Your turn.

My turn.

Who's next?

I'm next. You're next.

I agree/I don't agree.

Clarification Phrases

How do you spell _____?

What does _____ mean?

I don't understand.

Please speak more slowly.

Please repeat.

Could you repeat that?

Polite Phrases

Thank you.

You're welcome.

Leave Taking Phrases

It was nice talking to you.

See you later.

See you soon.

See you tomorrow.

Have a nice weekend.

MATERIALS MANAGERS

Duties:

- Pass out papers for the teacher.
- Distribute and collect books.
- Be sure the cabinet is neat before you leave.
- Be sure all materials (dictionaries, tapes, etc.,) are put away before you leave.

LANGUAGE YOU NEED TO DO THESE JOBS:

Did everyone get a handout?

Here you go. Here you are.

Does anyone need a sheet?

Who needs one?

There is one book missing.

Who forgot to put back the ...?

Should everyone get a book, or should students share?

TRAINERS

Duties:

- Help new students. Ask them to sit with you. Introduce yourself.
- Show the new students where to sign in. Show them where the materials are.
- Help the students feel comfortable.

LANGUAGE YOU NEED TO DO THESE JOBS:

Hi. Welcome to the class. My name is _____
What's your name?

Every day you sign this sheet when you come in. When you leave, you sign out. (Show the student the sign-in attendance sheet).

The books and materials are over there in the cabinet. (Show the student).

If you have any questions, please ask me. I can help you.

Commitment Sheet

I will use the following three game-like activities in my classroom to reinforce a specific skill (L, S, R, W) during the next three months.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

References

Websites

- Donna's workshop handouts: <http://www.quia.com/pages/donna/workshops>
- 50 Stimulating Classroom Starters: <http://www.quia.com/pages/donna/workshops>
- Different games every day: <http://www.agameaday.com/>
- Icebreakers: <http://www.icebreakers.ws/>
- Icebreakers, what to do on the first day:
<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachttp.htm>
- Games, puzzles, worksheets, templates: <http://www.suelebeau.com/freetools.htm>
- Variety of games: <http://www.group-games.com/games-by-type>
- Word search, crossword puzzles: <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/>
- Workplace Basics: SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) <http://www.ericdigests.org/1992-5/skills.htm>
- Worksheets, puzzles: <http://www.theteacherscorner.net/printable-worksheets/>

Other Resources

A Course in Language Teaching. Penny Ur, Cambridge University Press

Cathy's Cards, Kathy Diaz, Alta ESL

Conversation Inspirations, Nancy Zelman, Alta ESL

Cooperative Learning, Spencer Kagen, Kagen Publishing

Five-Minute Activities, Penny Ur and Andrew Right, Cambridge University Press

Learner Persistence, from *NCSALL Student Circle Guide*, John Comings

Principles of Language Learning and Teaching, Douglas Brown, Longman

Ventures, Books 1, 2, 3, 4, and Teacher's Toolkit CD-ROM in the Teacher's Edition,
K. Lynn Savage, Gretchen Bitterlin, Dennis Johnson, Donna Price, Sylvia Ramirez,
Cambridge University Press

Zero Prep, Laurel Pollard and Natalie Hess, Alta ESL