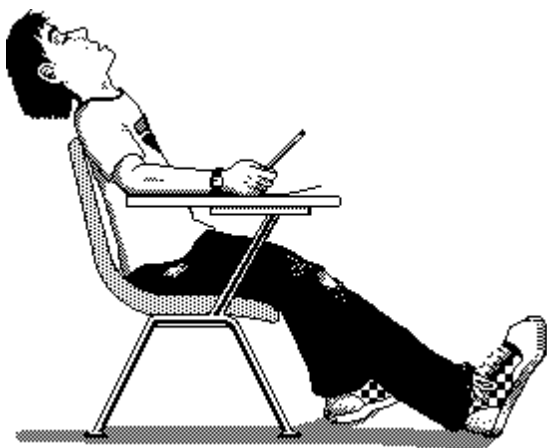


Not Hangman again...



**Games for the
English language
classroom**

An Englishdroid publication

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Introduction

These are English language games which you can play in your classes. They require little or no preparation and minimal resources. Most of them are essentially very similar – word-guessing – but variations in the rules make them different games.

They are not related to particular language points. They are chiefly old favourites which you will have played before, but may forget at critical moments. A few of them are, on reflection, not very good, but you might have more success with them than I did.

My students' favourites were perhaps Backs to the Board, Five Things and Panic Word, especially Backs to the Board.

They are intended for classes of 8-20 students, divided into 2 teams. With larger classes most games can easily be adapted for more teams.

Gltagog-X513
Englishdroid

Backs to the Board

Aim

Guess words from clues provided by team-mates.

Preparation

None.

Play

Divide the class into 2 teams. Put 2 chairs in front of the whiteboard, with their backs to the board. A member of each team sits in the chairs. They are not allowed to look over their shoulders at the board. Write a word on the board, which the 2 players have to guess. Their team shouts clues, which can be verbal or mimed. They are not allowed to say the word, give any clues about the spelling or speak any language but English.

The first player to guess correctly wins a point for his team. You then write up another word and continue the game as long as you wish.

After about 3 words, change the players.

Example

The word is *elephant*. Students must not say 'Begins with E' or '*elefante*', but they can say 'Big animal with long nose' or mime an elephant's trunk.

Variations

1. A solitary student sits at the front, with the whole class shouting clues. This is generally less fun than a team game.
2. Instead of words, write up complete sentences. This is actually more successful than you might expect, even with low-level classes. You will hear students call out shocking things like, 'Past tense!'

Notes

An old ELT favourite and justly so.

Usually called *Back* to the Board, but I prefer *Backs* (plural) for reasons of accuracy, clarity and pedantry. Apart from the fact that more than one back is involved, we are referring, after all, to the orientation of the hinder surface of the body, not a return to a place previously visited.

The solitary version is sometimes called Hot Seat.

Balderdash

Aim

Invent false definitions for words and choose the true definitions.

Preparation

- Find some obscure words and their (true) definitions. A good source is the International House of Logorrhea at www.phrontistery.info/ihlstart.html.
- Provide small slips of paper for students to write false definitions on.

Play

The leader of the round chooses a word. He reads it aloud and spells it. Each player then invents a false meaning for this word that could fool the other players and writes it on a slip of paper. The leader should copy the true definition on to his slip of paper, so that he cannot be seen reading from the word card.

Each player hands his definition to the leader. The leader reads aloud each definition, including the correct one. Each player then votes on which definition he thinks is correct. The leader reveals the true meaning. The scores are totalled.

Another player becomes the new leader, and play continues.

Scoring: 1 point for every vote your false definition receives. 2 points if you choose the true meaning. The leader gets 3 points if nobody chooses the true meaning.

Example

The leader chooses *bettong*, a small Australian kangaroo. The 4 other players submit definitions as follows:

- Player A: South African salted meat
- Player B: a Malaysian tree
- Player C: a medieval measure of 660 yards
- Player D: a fool

Players A and C vote for 'a fool', Player B votes for 660 yards and Player D votes for the kangaroo. The leader and Players A and B all score 0, Player C scores 1 (from Player B) and Player D scores 4 (2 from Players A and C + 2 for the true meaning).

Variations

If there are few players, the leader can submit a bluff definition as well as the real definition.

The board game Beyond Balderdash has 4 categories besides word definitions:

Movies (describe the plot), **Dates** (say what happened on it), **People** (say what the person did), and **Initials** (say what they stand for).

Notes

From the board game of the same name. See the sample words on the next page.

Balderdash sample words

aulete	a person who plays the flute
belocolus	a magic stone that makes a soldier invisible
bettong	a small kangaroo
boletus	a variety of wild mushroom
collutory	antiseptic mouthwash
crwth	a 6-stringed violin
dorking	a chicken with 5 toes
exoduster	someone who leaves town in a hurry
fard	to put on makeup
forney	a ring worn on the fourth finger
galligaskins	loose baggy trousers
gravid	pregnant
hippiater	a horse doctor
histrixite	a Tasmanian mineral containing copper and iron
jargonelle	a pear which ripens early
mantelet	a bullet-proof screen
mawworm	a hypocrite
noddlethatcher	someone who makes hats and wigs
oxter	to walk along arm in arm
ozostomia	bad breath
pistareen	a Spanish coin worth 20 cents
ramfeezeled	exhausted, tired
sclaff	to scrape the ground with a golf club before hitting the ball
screeve	to draw pictures on a sidewalk for money
shiggers	tight trousers worn by football players
splate	a substance used in shoe making
toison	the wool of a young sheep
tranka	a long cylindrical box which jugglers balance with their feet
wakiup	an American Indian hut
wallygowdy	a precious jewel or gem

Battleships

Aim

Find an opponent's words on a grid.

Preparation

Photocopy a worksheet like the one below for each team.

Play

Give each team a category (see Appendix II). They have to come up with (say) 7 words that belong to that category. Each word is a battleship. They enter the words on the grid titled 'our ships', horizontally, vertically or diagonally, 1 letter per square. Letters should not be in adjacent squares.

The teams then take turns in trying to sink each other's ships. They do this by announcing a target square on the enemy's grid (e.g. B5). If there is a letter in that square, the other team must reveal it. If the square is blank, the team says, 'Miss!'

At any point a team may guess the complete word, but not more than 1 guess is allowed per turn.

The first team to sink all the other's ships (i.e. find out all the words) wins.

Example

Team A's category is fruit and Team B's is jobs. Hits are in **bold**. Misses are shown by an **x**.

Team A's words										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	S	T	R	A	W	B	E	R	R	Y
2										
3	B		P							O
4	A			E				A		R
5	N				A			P		A
6	A					R	x	P		N
7	N					x		L		G
8	A		P	L	U	M		E		E
9										
10		P	I	N	E	A	P	P	L	E

Team B's words										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1		A	S	T	R	O	N	A	U	T
2		x								
3	L		D	O	C	T	O	R		T
4	E									E
5	C		N	U	R	S	E			A
6	T									C
7	U		P					P		H
8	R			O				I		E
9	E				E			M		R
10	R					T		P		

Team A says 'B2' and Team B replies 'Miss!' Team B tries F6 and Team A says 'R'. Team A tries D3 and gets O. Team B tries G6 and misses. Team A tries E3 and gets C. Team B tries F7 and misses. Team A tries C3, gets D and guesses 'DOCTOR'.

Variations

You can vary the size of the grid, number of words, length of words, rules about positioning, number of shots per turn, etc.

Notes

Traditional game. See the worksheet on the next page.

Blankety-Blank

Aim

Predict missing words in sentences.

Preparation

Prepare some sentences with missing words.

Play

Read out a sentence, with a blank instead of a word or phrase. All the players write down the word or phrase they think is missing. They score 1 point for every other player who chose the same answer as they.

Example

You say, 'On Friday evenings I go home and give my wife a big BLANK.' Of 10 students, 4 write *kiss*, 3 *present*, 2 *bunch of flowers* and 1 *box of chocolates*. They score 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively.

Variations

Set it up like the TV show, with 2 players guessing answers given by a 'celebrity panel' of other students.

Notes

From the British game show of the same name. See also Family Fortunes.

Blockbusters

Aim

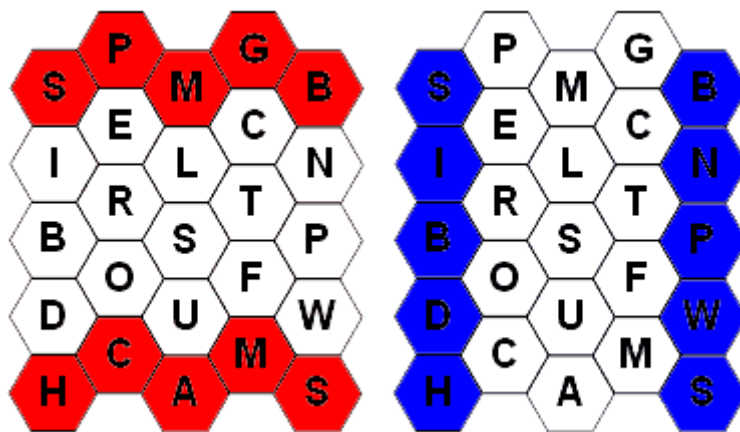
Make an unbroken line of cells by guessing words from clues.

Preparation

Make a 5x5 grid of hexagons like the one below on an OHP transparency and project the grid on to the whiteboard.

Play

Put the class in 2 teams. One team is represented by Noughts (O), the other by Crosses (X). The aim is to win cells and thereby make an unbroken line of cells from one edge of the grid to the opposite edge (left to right or top to bottom):



The line does not have to be straight.

Each cell contains the initial letter of a word. One team chooses a cell. Give the clue for that word. The first person in either team to shout out the correct answer wins the cell. Mark it with a O or a X. That team then chooses the next cell.

Example

Noughts choose B. The teacher says 'Synonym of courageous.' Students call out various answers until a student in Noughts says *brave* and wins the cell. Noughts then choose R and win it. They then choose L, but Crosses get the answer first. Crosses choose S, but lose it to Noughts. Eventually Noughts have B, R, S, T and N, thereby linking left to right and winning the game.

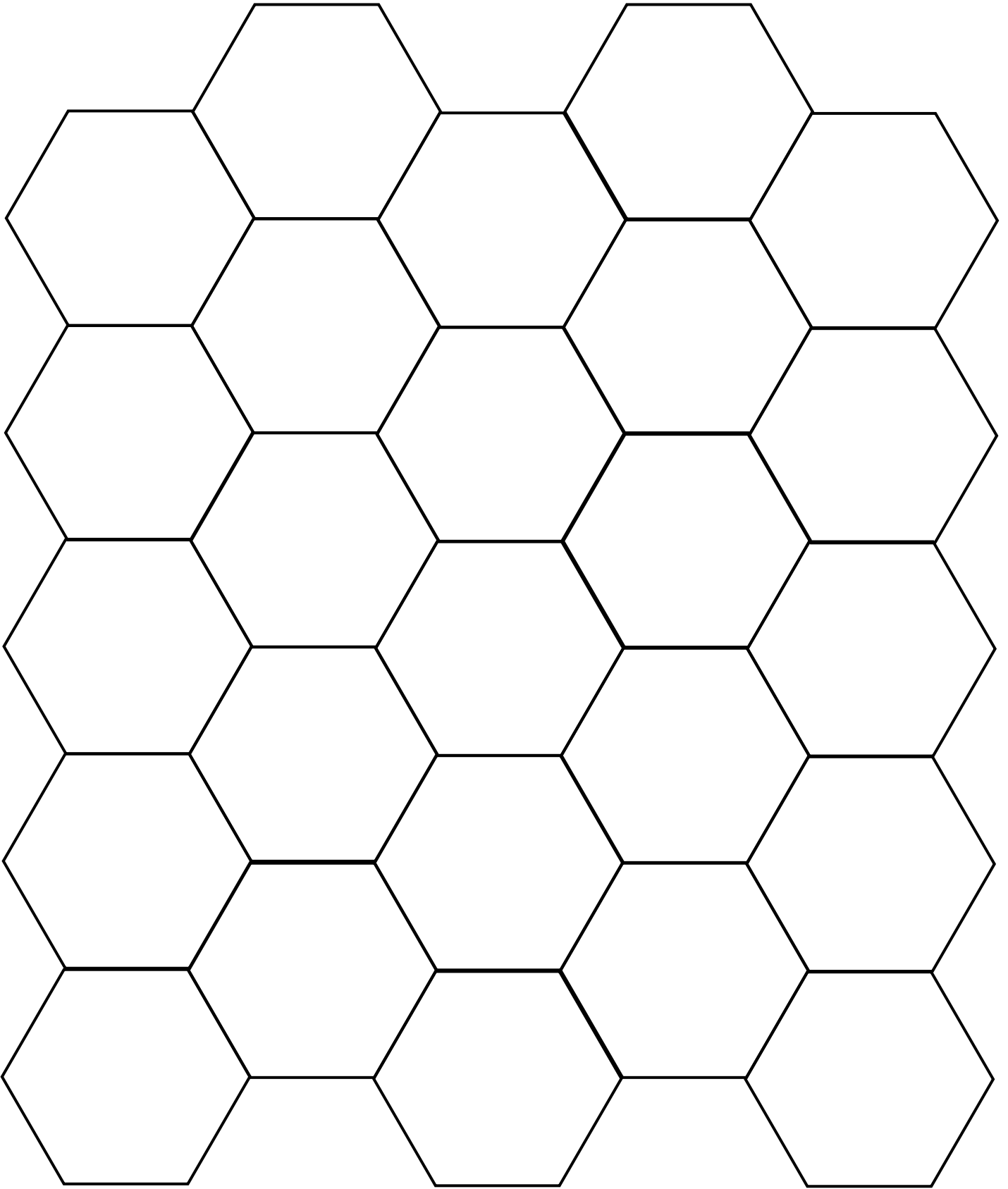
Variations

I have made a few changes to the original rules, which you can find on the Internet.

Notes

Adapted from the game show of the same name. See the grid on the next page.

Blockbusters grid



Boggle

Aim

Make as many words as possible from random letters.

Preparation

None.

Play

Put the students in small teams. Draw a 4x4 square on the board and insert random letters. (Include enough vowels.) Give the students about 5 minutes to make as many words as possible. The letters of a word must be adjacent. You cannot use a letter more than once in the same word.

Score only those words that no other team has got. For words of 3 letters - 1 point; 4 letters - 3 points; 5 or more letters - 10 points.

Example

From this square you can make the words FAN, COPS, ANTICS, SPAN and many more. You are not allowed to make FAT or DISC (not all letters adjacent) or KICK (using K twice).

F	A	W	C
N	U	P	O
T	K	C	S
D	I	T	U

Variations

You can vary the number of squares, the score, the timing, etc. In the board game Big Boggle there is a 5x5 grid and the minimum word size is 4 letters.

A similar game uses a 3x3 grid. The letter in the centre of the grid must be used in every word. Squares do **not** have to be adjacent.

A	W	C
U	P	O
K	C	S

Possible words in this example include *caps, cops, coup, coups, cups, cusp, opus, pack, packs, paws, pock, puck, soap, soup, swap* and *wasp*.

Notes

Adapted from the board game of the same name.

Challenge

Aim

Add 1 letter to a word in turn without completing the word.

Preparation

None.

Play

Ask a student to think of (but not utter) a word and tell you the first letter. Write the letter on the board. Ask the next student to think of a word beginning with that letter and tell you the second letter. And so on. The aim of the game is to never finish the word, but always try to make it longer.

A student may get stuck because:

- he thinks the word is already complete and cannot be made any longer
- he does not know any word beginning with those letters
- he suspects the intended word is misspelled.

If stuck, he is **not** allowed to pass. Instead, he has a choice of adding another letter (i.e. bluffing) or challenging the previous player.

If he challenges the previous player, that player must now reveal the word he was thinking of. If that word does not exist or is misspelled or is no longer than the word already on the board, this is a successful challenge.

If a player is successfully challenged or unsuccessfully challenges another player, they are out of the game. Game continues until only 1 player is left alive (the winner).

Example

First student thinks of *fish* and says F. You write F on the board. Second student thinks of *funny* and says U. Board now says FU. And so on.

Letters on board	Response to challenge	Successful challenge?
FURIUS	furiusly	Yes (word is misspelled)
FURIOUS	furiouly	No (word is correct)
FURIOUS	furiosity	Yes (word does not exist)
FURIOUS	'Don't know'	Yes (player cannot make word longer)

Variations

A player loses a life instead of being eliminated straightaway.

Notes

Adapted slightly from 'I challenge' in *More Grammar Games* by Mario Rinvoluceri and Paul Davis, who credit it to Issam Al Khayyat.

Some classes hated this game, probably because it is not a team game and instead puts pressure on individuals. Also, players eliminated early can get bored.

Charades

Aim

Mime a title for team-mates to guess.

Preparation

Provide slips of paper for players to write titles on.

Play

Put the class in 2 teams. They think of titles of books, films, TV programmes or songs and write each title (and the genre) on a slip of paper. A player from Team A is given a title by Team B. He acts it out (without speaking) and his team-mates guess it.

If they can do so within a reasonable time, Team A gets a point and a player from Team B then acts out one of Team A's titles.

Special signals

- Book: Pretend to open a book.
- Film: Pretend to turn the handle of an antiquated film camera.
- TV programme: Draw a TV screen in the air.
- Song: Pretend to sing.
- Number of words in the title: Hold up fingers.
- Which word you're working on: Hold up fingers again.
- Number of syllables in the word: Lay fingers on arm.
- Which syllable you're working on: Lay fingers on arm again.
- Length of word: Make a 'little' or 'big' sign as if describing a penis.
- The entire concept: Sweep arms through the air.
- Sounds like: Cup hand behind ear.
- Longer version of : Pretend to stretch a piece of elastic.
- Shorter version of: Do a karate chop.
- Plural: Link little fingers.
- Past tense: Wave hand over shoulder toward back.

Example

The title is *Brokeback Mountain* (a film). The player pretends to turn a film camera, then holds 2 fingers in the air. He holds up 2 fingers again, then lays 2 fingers on his arm and draws a mountain in the air. He next holds up 1 finger and lays 2 fingers on his arm, then 2 fingers on his arm again (1st word, 2 syllables, 2nd syllable). He indicates his own back. Finally, he lays 1 finger on his arm, mimes breaking something and waves his hand over his shoulder.

Variations

Besides the genres mentioned above, you can mime the titles of plays, the names of people, places and things, and sayings. Other special signals are possible.

Notes

A traditional game which has been made into a number of television game shows.

Get the students themselves to think up the titles, as they won't have heard of the films, books, songs, etc. that you come up with.

Collocations Ladder

Aim

To guess words that make collocations.

Preparation

Make a list of suitable collocations, as in the example below.

Play

From a list of collocations, put the top and bottom words in a ladder on the board, leaving empty rungs for the blanks between. Each word must have links with the words next to it. Collocations can be read up or down, so these are both acceptable:

whale	blue
blue	whale

Put the class in 2 teams. Each turn ask them to choose, 'Top or bottom?' Add 1 letter to the uppermost or lowermost uncompleted word.

Each team guesses the word or passes. If they get it wrong or pass, the other team chooses top or bottom. They get a letter and guess or pass. If a team guesses correctly, they get 1 point and the next turn.

If only 1 letter is left and a team has failed to guess the word (e.g. *genera*), just add the remaining letter. Neither team gets the point.

Example

Your list is: *whale – blue – film – director – general – major – key – ring.*

whale	whale	whale	whale	whale
_____	b	bl	blue	blue
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	k	ke
ring	ring	ring	ring	ring

Team A chooses top and you add B, but they fail to guess the word, so play passes to team B. Team B also chooses top, so you add L. They correctly guess *blue* and choose bottom. They fail to guess from the letter K. Team A then chooses bottom and you add E.

Variations

You could play with weaker word associations, instead of strict collocations.

Notes

Adapted from the Indonesian game show, *Kata Berkait* (= Hooked Word).

Countdown Letters

Aim

Make the longest word from random letters.

Preparation

You need letter tiles or cards as in Scrabble, with the distribution reflecting their frequency in English. (See Appendix I.) Sort them into 2 piles: vowels and consonants.

Play

Divide the class into 2 teams. Team A picks 9 letters at random. They can specify only whether the letter is a vowel or a consonant.

Both teams then have a limited time (e.g. 1 minute) to find the longest word they can from those letters. Words that start with capital letters and abbreviations are not permitted.

The team with the longer word scores 1 point for each letter in their word. If there is a tie, both teams score.

Team B then picks 9 letters. And so on.

Example

Team A says 'Vowel' and gets an A. They then choose a consonant and get an R. They choose another consonant and get an F, then a vowel and get another A. In the end they have A, R, F, A, T, M, O, L, C.

Team A makes the word *fractal* (7 letters), while Team B comes up with *format* (6 letters). Team A gets 7 points, while Team B scores 0.

Team B then picks the letters G, O, K, W, P, S, H, I, U. Team A gets *pious* (5 letters) and Team B *whisk* (also 5 letters). Both teams get 5 points.

Variations

- According to the TV rules, the 9 letters must contain at least 3 vowels and 4 consonants.
- Teams could always score 1 point per letter, even if another team has made a longer word.

Notes

Adapted from the letters round of the British television quiz programme, Countdown, which was based on the French programme *Des chiffres et des lettres*.

Doublets

Aim

Turn a word into another word by changing 1 letter each turn.

Preparation

Complete the puzzles yourself first, so that you don't give the students impossible tasks.

Play

Players score points according to the number of steps taken to turn 1 word into another, 1 letter each turn. Write both the original and final words on the board.

Letters cannot be moved, merely substituted. The inventor, Lewis Carroll, wrote that, 'the links should be English words, such as might be used in good society.'

At the end of the game the player with the lowest score wins.

Example

Write up HEAD and TAIL.

Team A does it in 5 steps (HEAD – HEAL – TEAL – TELL – TALL – TAIL), Team B in 6 steps (HEAD – HEAL – SEAL – SELL – TELL – TALL – TAIL), so they score 5 and 6 points respectively.

Variations

A letter may also be added, removed or moved each turn (e.g. PEAS – PEAKS
SPEAK – PEAK).

Notes

Invented by Lewis Carroll and featured in the magazine Vanity Fair in 1879. Also known as Word Chains, Word Ladder, Word Golf, Stepwords, Ladderwords, Laddergrams, Transitions, Transformations, etc.

It is more of a puzzle than a game and probably not very enjoyable for most students.

Family Fortunes

Aim

Predict popular answers to questions.

Preparation

Make a list of questions. (See ideas on next page.)

Play

Read out a question. All the players write down the answer they think most of the other players will give. They score 1 point for every other player who chose the same answer as they.

Example

The teacher says, 'Name something you'd associate with the Queen of England.'

Of 10 students, 4 write *palace*, 3 *crown*, 2 *throne* and 1 *corgi*. They score 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively.

Variations

In the TV show contestants predict answers given by '100 people surveyed' beforehand, so you could provide your own answers (from a survey of teachers or another class?) and then play as a team game.

Notes

From the British game show of the same name, which is based on the American show Family Feud. See also Blankety-Blank.

Family Fortunes question ideas

- A boy's name beginning with J
- A breed of dog
- A domestic animal
- A famous Royal
- A food people give as a gift
- A food that can be brown or white
- A food that can be easily eaten without chewing
- A foreign country that you would want to visit
- A game played in bed
- A game played on a table besides cards
- A kind of ache
- A month that's also a person's name
- A non-living object with legs
- A number you have to memorise
- A part of the body beginning with the letter N
- A part of the body with 4 letters
- A reason you might stay inside on a beautiful day
- A Scandinavian country
- A sign of the zodiac
- A singer who is known by 1 name
- A sport in which 2 people compete against each other
- A TV soap
- A type of foreign money
- A way of cooking fish
- A word or phrase you hear in a tennis game
- An ancient city
- An animal beginning with the letter B
- An animal whose eggs you'd never eat for breakfast
- An animal with 3 letters in its name
- An animal you might see at a zoo
- An annual sporting event
- An occupation that begins with the letter J
- An occupation whose members must get tired of smiling
- An ugly colour
- A word beginning with 'snow'
- Besides a house or a car, the most expensive item you own
- One of the 7 dwarfs
- Some famous brothers
- Something a car can have two of
- Something a cat does
- Something a dentist would say
- Something a teenage boy can do for hours
- Something associated with Superman
- Something associated with pigs
- Something associated with Robinson Crusoe
- Something bad you wouldn't think about
- Something in the garden that's green
- Something London is famous for
- Something made of wool
- Something most people have only one of
- Something people eat with steak
- Something people might be allergic to
- Something red
- Something slippery
- Something someone does that annoys everyone in the room
- Something that comes in pairs
- Something that flies that doesn't have an engine
- Something that makes you scream
- Something that uses microchips
- Something that your dog does
- Something with a hole in it
- Something with a red light on it
- Something you associate with the sea
- Something you do before going to bed
- Something you do in the bathroom
- Something you do in a power cut
- Something you do standing on a chair
- Something you have more than 2 of in your body
- Something you have with coffee
- Something you learn how to do from a how-to book
- Something you might accidentally leave on all night
- Something you open other than a door
- Something you put in tea
- Something you put on walls
- Something you put out for the birds
- Something you stroke
- Something you throw away daily
- Something you wash once a week
- Something you wear on the beach
- Something you wear 2 of at the same time
- Something you wouldn't try even once
- Something you wouldn't want the police to find in the boot/trunk of your car
- Something you'd yell at if it stopped working
- The bad habit you'd most like to get rid of
- The heaviest item in your house

Five Things

Aim

Guess items in categories.

Preparation

Prepare 2 lists of categories. (See Appendix II.)

Play

Put the class in 2 teams. Give each team a (different) list of categories. The students must write 5 items – things/people/animals/places – in each category.

When both teams are ready, Team A reads out its category. Team B then has 1 minute to guess as many of the items as possible. For each correct guess Team B gets 1 point. For each item that was not guessed, Team A gets 1 point. (So 5 points are shared between the 2 teams.)

It is then Team A's turn to guess items from one of Team B's categories.

Example

Team A's category is things that are sticky. The 5 things they choose are honey, glue, asphalt, flypaper and napalm.

Team A secretary: Things that are sticky.

A Team B student: Honey!

Team A secretary: Yes.

Team B students: Syrup! (*No!*) Semen! (*No!*) Glue! (*Yes.*) Sellotape! (*No!*) Blu-Tak! (*No!*)... etc.

Variations

- If a team guesses all 5 items, they get a bonus of 2 points.
- The timekeeper can be either the teacher or a member of the team whose items are being guessed.

Notes

An established English language teaching game with various names, e.g. Brainstorm in the Reward course book series.

Letter Getter

Aim

Make the longest word from letters won by guessing words.

Preparation

None.

Play

Divide the class into 2 or more teams. Team A chooses a letter. Choose a word beginning with that letter and give a clue. The first member of either team to guess the word correctly wins the letter for their team. That team then chooses another letter.

The aim is to get enough right letters to make a long word.

At a suitable point end the round and let the teams try to make the longest word possible from the letters they have won.

Example

Team A chooses the letter S. You say, 'A contagious skin disease marked by itching and small raised red spots.' The students shout out things like *smallpox*, *syphilis*, etc. until a student in Team B correctly guesses *scabies*. Team B then chooses the letter A. Your clue is 'A type of fool' and someone in team B is the first to guess *April*.

After several letters have been won, you stop the round. Team A has N, O, N, R, E and D. Team B has S, A, P, W, T and F. Team A makes *drone* (5 letters) and Team B makes *fast* (4 letters), so Team A wins.

Variations

You could use categories, rather than definition-type clues. For instance, a team chooses the letter B and the (randomly drawn) category is "Words beginning and ending with the same letter" (e.g. *bomb*, *bulb*).

Notes

Derived by me from other games in this manual and played with my students a few times. I should probably think of a better name for it.

MasterWord

Aim

Guess a secret word.

Preparation

None.

Play

You can play it with any number of students. Choose a secret word of 4 letters. Students try to guess the word. Unlike in Hangman, they must suggest **complete words**, not individual letters.

Write the words and 2 columns of numbers on the board. The columns indicate:

- how many letters the students have got right
- how many letters are both right **and** in the correct position.

Example

Your word is FISH. The students' guesses are as follows:

score	guess	explanation of score
0	0	LOVE No letters right
0	1	STAR S is right, but in the wrong place
0	0	MARK No letters right
1	1	TINY I is right and in the right place
1	2	SING S and I are right; S is in the wrong place, I in the right place
2	2	KISS S and I are right and in the right place
3	3	DISH I, S and H are right and in the right place
4	4	FISH All 4 letters are right and in the right place

In practice the class usually needs more guesses.

Variations

Some versions omit the left-hand column, which shows how many letters are both right **and** in the correct position.

Notes

Over the years this game has appeared in various guises, such as Bulls & Cows, Jotto, My Word and Mastermind.

Panic Word

Aim

Provide definitions and clues for as many words as possible from a list.

Preparation

Make lists of 10 words each. Write each list on a separate piece of paper.

Play

Put the students in 2 teams. Give a list to a student from Team A. They have 2 minutes to get their team-mates to guess as many words as possible. Then give a (different) list to Team B.

Example

A student has this list:

1. handle
2. largest
3. wander
4. pointed
5. concert
6. talked
7. hoping
8. criticism
9. gradually
10. plate

They choose words in random order and provide definitions or clues such as 'Synonym of *biggest*' and 'You eat food off it'.

Variations

- Members of either team can guess the words.
- Put each word on its own slip of paper. The student takes 1 slip after another.

Notes

This game has various incarnations and names.

Pictionary

Aim

Guess words from pictures drawn by players.

Preparation

Provide slips of paper for players to write words on.

Play

Put the class into 2 teams. Each team thinks of words for the other team to guess and writes each word on a slip of paper.

When both teams are ready, a player from Team A is given a word by Team B. He has to draw it on the whiteboard (without speaking or writing) and his team-mates guess it.

If they can do so within a reasonable time, Team A gets a point and a player from Team B then has to draw one of Team A's words. And so on.

Example

The word is *nightmare*, so the player draws a person lying on a bed, with a thought bubble that contains a ghost coming from his head.

Variations

- The opposing team can make unhelpful suggestions or comments about the picture.
- Players from both teams draw at the same time.

Notes

From the board game of the same name.

Quick Scrabble

Aim

Make words crossword-fashion.

Preparation

Make a 9x9 grid like the one below on an OHP transparency and project the grid on to the whiteboard.

Play

Play like Scrabble, except that:

- Each player or team has **any** 7 letters they like. (No need to make letter tiles.)
- Score only 1 point per letter.
- The numbers 2 and 3 represent double and triple word scores.

If you don't already know how to play Scrabble, you can find detailed rules and examples on the Internet.

Example

³ E				² E
D	² R	O	I	D
G		³		I
E			²	T

DROID gets $5 \times 2 = 10$ points. EDGE gets $4 \times 3 = 12$ points.

³ T	E	A	C	² H
	²	L		O
		³ S		P
		O	²	E

TEACH gets $3 \times 2 \times 5 = 30$ points. HOPE gets only 4 points.

Variations

You can of course vary the number of squares, scoring, etc, as you please.

Notes

Adapted from the board game Scrabble by somebody (sorry, can't recall whom) and slightly modified again. See the grid on the next page.

Quick Scrabble grid

3				2				3
	2						2	
		3				3		
			2		2			
2				*				2
			2		2			
		3				3		
	2						2	
3				2				3

Scattergories

Aim

Think of words in a category that begin with a certain letter.

Preparation

Prepare a list of categories. (See Appendix II for ideas.) Either make a printed list with the categories in columns that students can fill in, or just write the categories on the board.

Play

Students can work alone or in pairs or small groups. Reveal the categories and the initial letter and start timing. Allow about 3 minutes.

Students try to think of 1 answer for each category.

Players read their answers aloud. They score points only if no other player has the same answers.

After 1 round, change the initial letter.

Example

The first initial letter is T.

category	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D
animals	tiger	tiger	turtle	teacher
celebrities	Tiger Woods	Tiger Woods	Tina Turner	Mr T
jobs	teacher	teacher	tailor	thief
nationalities	Turkey	Tokyo	Turkish	Texan
buildings	temple		theatre	toilet
things you can read	textbook		thesaurus	toilet paper
vehicles	train	train	tram	tricycle
weather			typhoon	tempestuous
score	2	0	8	6½

Students A and B have the same answer for the first category and therefore score nothing. Student C gets a point, while Student D gets a smack round the mouth.

The scores for that round are as shown. (Student D gets only ½ mark for 'toilet paper'.)

Variations

- Allow more than 1 answer per category.
- Give points for **all** correct answers, e.g. 3 points for a unique answer and 1 point for a non-unique one.

Notes

Derived from the board game of the same name.

Smart Mouth

Aim

Make words from initial and final letters.

Preparation

You need letter cards or tiles, as in Scrabble.

Play

Put the letter tiles face down. Players turn them up in pairs. The first student to say a word beginning with one of the letters and ending with the other wins the tiles.

At the end the player with the most tiles wins.

Example

The letters B and C are turned up and won by a player who shouts 'Club'. Then the letters L and K are won by 'Luck'. And so on.

Variations

The first letter turned up has to be the first letter in the word. B and C could be won by 'Basic' but not 'Club'.

Notes

From the board game of the same name.

Snatch

Aim

Make words from random letters and steal opponents' words.

Preparation

You need letter cards or tiles, as in Scrabble.

Play

Put the letter tiles face down. Players turn up 1 letter at a time.

A player who can make a word of 3 letters or more calls out the word and takes the letters. He places the word in front of him, so the other players can see it.

Other players can now snatch or steal his word by adding another upturned letter to make a longer word. Players may take a word at any time. They can add to their own words.

They can also take complete words and join them together to create a new word.

At the end the player with the most tiles wins.

Example

Visible letters are T, Q, A, C. Player A calls out 'CAT' and takes the letters. Then R is turned up and Player B shouts 'CART' and takes Player A's letters. When a K is turned up, another player makes 'TRACK'.

Variations

Play without letter tiles (like Quick Scrabble). Write the letters and words on the board. Team A makes a 3-letter word and then Team B tries to snatch it by adding a letter to make a 4-letter word. Team C then tries to make a 5-letter word, and so on.

Notes

Snatch is a board game, apparently based on a Victorian game. There is a similar card game called Word Thief, which you might prefer to use as a name for this game.

Taboo

Aim

Guess words from spoken clues that must exclude forbidden words.

Preparation

Prepare cards with keywords and taboo words like the example below, or – if there is time – get the students to do this.

Play

Put the class in 2 teams. Start the clock. Show a player from Team A a card. Once he has memorised the keyword and taboo words, give the card to Team B. The player gives spoken clues only, without gestures or spellings.

If he says one of the taboo words, members of Team B need to point it out. In that case Team A scores nothing for that word and has to try another word.

Once Team A has correctly guessed the word, show the player another card. The team tries to guess as many words as possible in the allotted time (e.g. 3 minutes).

When time runs out, a player from Team B comes forward.

Example

Some examples of Taboo cards:

exercise
gym
aerobics
workout
fit
body

dictionary
book
word
meaning
definition
look

headache
head
pain
aspirin
hurt
migraine

honest
true
lie
trust
good
money

The Team A player starts with *dictionary*. He says, 'Something we use if we don't know some vocabulary in English' and the team guesses correctly. For *headache* he says, 'The part my body above my neck – ow! ow!' For *honest* he says, 'If someone is BLANK we can trust them – ' and Team B yells that he has used the taboo word *trust*.

Variations

The opposing team can make unhelpful suggestions at the same time.

Notes

From the board game of the same name. Appears in an ELT book as Don't Say It!

Twenty Questions

Aim

Guess an object by asking yes/no questions.

Preparation

None.

Play

Put the class in 2 teams. Each team thinks of some objects for the other team to guess.

Team A chooses an object. Team B asks a maximum of 20 questions until they guess it, in which case they score a point. If they can't guess correctly in 20 questions, they score nothing. Team A then has to guess Team B's object, and so on.

The questions should all be answered with a simple 'Yes' or 'No' (or 'Maybe').

Example

Team A chooses their English teacher as the item to be guessed.

Team B: Can you eat it? (1 question)

Team A: Maybe.

Team B: Is it alive? (2)

Team A: Yes.

Team B: Is it smaller than a dog? (3)

Team A: No.

Team B: Is it intelligent? (4)

Team A: Maybe.

Team B: Is it a monkey? (5)

Team A: No.

Team B: Is it a human? (6)

Team A: Yes.

Team B: Is it famous? (7)

Team A: No. [etc.]

Variations

- The class of object is specified beforehand, e.g. a member of the animal or plant kingdom, or a thing. (This version is called Animal, Vegetable or Mineral.)
- Guess the celebrity or the occupation.

Notes

Traditional parlour game with various TV and radio incarnations, including What's My Line?

Wheel of Fortune

Aim

Guess the word from letters that are added gradually.

Preparation

None. There is, unfortunately, no wheel in this version.

Play

As in Hangman, think of a word (or phrase) and write a blank for each letter on the board. Divide the class into 2 teams.

Consonants can be guessed, but vowels have to be bought, using points earned by correctly guessed consonants. The letter Y is treated as a consonant.

Team A guesses a consonant. If the consonant is not found in the word, play passes to Team B. If the consonant is in the word, Team A gets 1 point for every occurrence of the letter. Team A can then buy 1 vowel for every point they have.

If the vowel is not in the word, play passes to Team B. (Team A keeps any remaining points for their next turn.) If the vowel is in the word, Team A can buy another vowel (if they have any points left) or guess another consonant. Vowels do not earn points.

The first team to guess the whole word wins.

Example

You choose the word *encyclopedia* and write _____ on the board.

Team A wrongly guesses T and play passes to Team B, which guesses N. They get 1 point and buy E. The board now reads:

E N _ _ _ _ _ E _ _ _

Team B then wrongly guesses S and play passes back to Team A. Team A guesses C and gets 2 points. They buy A, then I. The board now reads:

E N C _ C _ _ _ E _ I A

Team A correctly guesses the word and wins that game.

Variations

- The word can belong to a category (see Appendix II), which is revealed before players start guessing.
- The letter Y could be treated as a vowel in *hymn*, *happy*, etc.

Notes

Adapted from the game show of the same name.

Word Noughts & Crosses

Aim

To make 3-letter words in a 3x3 grid.

Preparation

None.

Play

Draw a 3x3 grid on the board. Put the class in 2 teams. The teams take turns in adding a letter to the grid. The first team to make a 3-letter word wins.

Words can read from left to right, top to bottom or (diagonally) top-left to bottom-right.

Example

Team A beats team B.

	A	

	A	E

X		
	A	E

X		
	A	E
R		

X		
	A	E
R		Q

X		
	A	E
R	X	Q

X	T	
	A	E
R	X	Q

Variations

The danger is that students start playing ultra-defensively, so that every game ends with no words being formed. An alternative is to use a bigger grid, e.g. 6x6 with 4-letter words.

You could also allow words to read upwards, back-to-front, etc.

Notes

An old game, probably, which I found somewhere on the Internet.

Word Race

Aim

Write down as many words as possible that match certain criteria.

Preparation

None.

Play

Students play in pairs, teams or on their own. Tell them the criterion. They have 2 minutes to write down as many words as possible that match it.

Score 1 point for each word. Disallow inflections, i.e. changes in word ending to express number or verb form. (For example, award only 1 point for *coin*, *coins*, *coined* and *coining*.)

There are many possible criteria, including these:

- words contain certain letters:
 - at the beginning (e.g. two letters, such as *ki-* or *fr-*)
 - at the end (e.g. suffixes such as *-able*)
 - in the middle (e.g. double letters, such as *-aa-*, *-bb-...* *-zz-*)
- words begin and end with the same letter, which must be different each time (e.g. *a__a*, *b__b...* *z__z*)
- words begin with one letter in the alphabet and finish with the next (e.g. *a__b*, *b__c...* *z__a*)
- words rhyme with a certain sound (e.g. */i:n/*)
- words have a certain number of syllables (e.g. 3, 4, 5)
- words are stressed on a particular syllable (e.g. 1st, 2nd, 3rd)
- combinations of more than one of the above.

Example

You tell the students that their words have to begin with two particular letters. You write **ki** on the board. The students come up with:

- Team A: *kid*, *kill*, *kind*, *king*, *kingdom*, *kitten* (6 points)
- Team B: *kick*, *kid*, *kill*, *kilt*, *kind*, *king*, *kinky*, *kiosk*, *kiss*, *kitchen* (10 points)
- Team C: *kick*, *kid*, *kidnap*, *kidney*, *kill*, *killer*, *kilogram*, *kilometre*, *kilowatt*, *kimono*, *kind*, *kindergarten*, *kindness*, *king*, *kiss*, *kit*, *kitchen*, *kiwi* (18 points)

Variations

Score more points for longer words. Score only words that no other team has got. Allow inflections. Allow more time for harder criteria and less time for easier ones.

Notes

Adapted from a number of similar games.

Word Rummy

Aim

Dispose of all the letter cards in your hand by making words.

Preparation

Provide a set of letter cards (or tiles) for each group of 2-6 players/teams. (See Appendix I.) You could make your own or write the letters on ordinary playing cards.

Play

Deal each player 7 cards. Place the next card face up to start the discard pile and the remaining cards face down to form the stock.

The object of the game is to dispose of all the cards in your hand by:

- **melding:** making a word from your cards and placing it face up in front of you. The word must have at least 3 letters.
- **laying off:** adding cards from your hand to a meld already on the table to make a longer word. The new letters may be used anywhere in the word.
- **discarding:** throwing away 1 card to the discard pile at the end of each turn.

Each turn draw 1 card from the stock or the discard pile. End the turn by discarding. If the stock pile runs out, turn over the discard pile to form a new stock.

A player wins by disposing of all of his cards. Play stops immediately. Other players may not put down any more cards, even if they have word combinations in their hands. They have to pay the winner points for the cards remaining in their hands, as follows: 5 points per vowel, 1 point per consonant, 25 points per wild card.

Deal again. At the end of the game, the player with the most points wins.

Wild cards/jokers/blank tiles can represent any letter. When playing a wild card, the player must state which letter it represents. Any player may pick up a wild card by putting that letter in its place.

Example

Player A melds the cards H, A and T to make HAT. Player B melds S, a wild card, N and G and says this is SONG. He lays off C on HAT, making CHAT. Player A puts an O in SONG and takes Player B's wild card.

Variations

- Words must have at least 4 letters.
- Omit cards for J, Q, X and Z, as these letters occur infrequently in English.
- You may not lay off any cards on other players' melds until you have laid down at least 1 meld of your own.
- As in regular Rummy, many other variations are possible.

Notes

Based on the Rummy family of card games. I don't think I ever got the students playing it successfully.

Word Whiz

Aim

Move along a board of letter squares by thinking of words in categories that begin with the letter you are on.

Preparation

Make a grid like the one below on an OHP transparency and project the grid on to the whiteboard.

Write categories (see Appendix II) on slips of paper.

Play

Put the class in teams. (The grid below is for up to 5 teams.) The teams all start on the uppermost letter in the grid. To move off a letter a team must provide a word which begins with that letter and belongs to a random category. If the team cannot think of a word in a reasonable time, they are stuck on that letter square until their next turn, when they are given another random category.

Draw the categories randomly from your pile of slips of paper. When they are finished, start the pile again.

Mark a team's latest position on the board with a X.

Example

Turn 1: All 3 teams are on the letter T. Team 1 starts. The category they get is Vehicles. They say, 'Train' and move to the next letter, O. Team 2 then gets the category Musical Instruments and says, 'Trombone', so they move to O. Team 3 gets the category Tools and can't think of anything, so they stick on T.

Turn 2: Team 1 then gets the category Sea Life and says 'Octopus', so they move to the letter A. Team 2 gets Mammals, can't think of anything and stick on O. Team 3 gets Cities, says 'Tokyo' and moves to O.

Variations

You could make a more attractive board which the students move pieces along.

To make it harder: each team must provide **different** answers for the **same** category each turn. Start with a different team each turn.

Notes

From the board game of the same name. See the grid on the next page.

Word Whiz grid

First letter	Team				
	1	2	3	4	5
T					
O					
A					
W					
B					
C					
D					
S					
F					
*					

XenoWord

Aim

Guess members of a lexical set as more letters are added to words.

Preparation

Make a list of 8 related words - e.g. colours, animals, food, clothes, football, jobs.

Play

Put the students in 2 teams. Write the numbers 1 to 8 on the board. Tell the students what the words have in common, e.g. 'They are all jobs.'

Team A chooses a number. Write the first letter of that word on the board. Team A guesses the word or passes. If they get it wrong or pass, Team B can choose the same or a different number. They get a letter and guess or pass. If a team guesses correctly, they get 1 point and the next turn.

If only 1 letter is left and a team has failed to guess the word (e.g. *astrologe*), just add the remaining letter. Neither team gets the point.

Example

These are your words:

- | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|-------------|
| 1 | acrobat | 5 | astrologer |
| 2 | clown | 6 | rat-catcher |
| 3 | masseur | 7 | thief |
| 4 | proctologist | 8 | lap dancer |

Team A chooses number 1. Write the letter *a* on the board. Team A incorrectly guesses *architect*. Play passes to Team B, which also chooses number 1. You add a second letter: *ac*. Team B incorrectly guesses *actor*. Team A again chooses 1: *acr*. Team A correctly guesses *acrobat*. They get another turn and choose number 6. They guess incorrectly. Team B chooses number 2. The board now looks like this:

- | | | | |
|---|---------|---|---|
| 1 | acrobat | 5 | |
| 2 | c | 6 | r |
| 3 | | 7 | |
| 4 | | 8 | |

Variations

Buy, Guess or Pass: Each team has £15. They buy letters for £1. If they guess the word, they receive £1 for every letter not already written on the board. The team with the most money wins.

Example: F is on the board. Team A buys a letter for £1: FL. The team then buys another letter: FLO. The team correctly guesses FLOWER and gains £3 (for WER).

Notes

A game of my own invention.

Appendix I: Letter distribution in board games

Scrabble

A	4	H	1	O	4	V	1
B	1	I	4	P	1	W	1
C	1	J	1	Q	1	X	1
D	2	K	1	R	3	Y	1
E	6	L	2	S	2	Z	1
F	1	M	1	T	3	<i>blank</i>	2
G	1	N	3	U	2	total	52

Upwords

A	7	H	3	O	7	V	1
B	3	I	7	P	3	W	2
C	4	J	1	Qu	1	X	1
D	5	K	2	R	5	Y	2
E	8	L	5	S	6	Z	1
F	3	M	5	T	5	total	100
G	3	N	5	U	5		

Buyword

A	8	H	4	O	8	V	3
B	2	I	7	P	4	W	2
C	4	J	2	Q	1	X	1
D	4	K	2	R	6	Y	2
E	12	L	4	S	5	Z	2
F	2	M	3	T	6	<i>wild</i>	9
G	4	N	6	U	4	total	117

Appendix II: Word categories

animals	film / book / musical genres / titles	places to eat	things you can read
appearance	film people	plants	things you collect
bad habits	food	relatives	things you do alone / with other people
baseball	football	road / street	things you listen to / watch
beach	fruit / vegetables	school / school subjects	things you replace
big / small	furniture	sea life	time
body	gaits	shapes	tools
book	garden	shops	tourist attractions
buildings	geography	sounds	toys
car	handbag	sports / games	travel
celebrities	hobbies	sportsmen/women	units
circus	hotel	states of the USA	vehicles
cities	house	things in a kitchen / bathroom / bedroom / sitting room	ways to get rich
clothes	-isms	things in water / on trees / on a wall	weapons
collectibles	jobs	things made of wood / leather / metal / plastic	weather
colours	languages	things that are black / white / green / etc	weddings
comic book characters	liquids	things that are plugged in	words beginning and ending with same letter
communication	luck	things that are square / round / pointed / cylindrical	words containing double letters
computers	mammals / birds / fish / reptiles / invertebrates	things that are wet / dry / cold / hot / sticky	words rhyming with certain sounds
containers	metals and stones	things that fly / grow / move fast	words with 1 / 2 / 3 / etc syllables
cooking	monsters	things to put on food	words with particular suffixes
countries	musical instruments	things to take to a desert island	words with stress on 1st / 2nd / etc syllable
countryside	names, first	things with wheels / legs	
crimes	nationalities	things you can do with your mouth / feet / hands	
currencies	nice / nasty / scary things		
diseases	office		
domestic routines	-ologies		
drink	outer space		
dwellings	pairs		
electrical / electronic appliances / gadgets	parts of speech: nouns / verbs / etc		
emotions	party		
excuses	personality		
farm			
festivals			