

Chapter

7 Mini Games

When to Play

After all the day's planned lessons have been completed, it is not uncommon to have a few minutes to spare before the bell rings. Or, sometimes you need to divide up a long lesson with a quick, energetic break. Use these time slots to invigorate students and enhance their vocabulary comprehension with mini games!

These games are intentionally designed to require minimal preparation and basic rules so that you can quickly choose one and immediately get playing. The games can be used to review the current unit's words and older ones as well, and they serve as an excellent way to informally check for understanding. These games can also be expanded for longer play and review, which may be especially useful in after-school and summer-school sessions. Vary your games for increased interest; students may grow bored of the same game each week. It is always useful to model an example of game play before the game begins.

The games are listed in order of critical thinking required; the earlier games review the basics and the later games require deeper critical thinking.

Simple List

Materials Needed:

- Blank paper
- Pens

The Rules:

Divide students into two (or more) teams. Give each team one minute to list as many words as possible from the current unit on a piece of paper. The team with the most words wins.

How to Expand the Game:

- The team with the most words must explain the definition of each word. If they miss a definition, the other team can take over explaining those definitions to win.

Look Out For:

- If you have a word wall, cover it during this game.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Provide students with the first letter of the words or pictures of the words before they complete their list.

Conversation Competition

Materials Needed:

- Unit's word list for each student (can also use index of book)

The Rules:

Assign each student a partner. When the teacher says go, the students stand up and have a specific amount of time to talk with their partners on any *appropriate* subject. They must use at least 10 of the unit's words in their conversation and check them off as they use them. When they've used all 10, they sit down. The teacher should circulate the classroom during the game to engage students in conversation and keep them on task. The first students to finish win a prize, but only if they share their conversation with the class and used the words correctly. If not, the next group shares, and so forth.

How to Expand the Game:

- After the game, you might ask multiple student groups who were having strong, vocabulary-rich discussions to share their conversation with the class.
- If students have been sitting for a long time prior to the start of the game, you can encourage the partner groups to walk around the room together while they talk.

Look Out For:

- Make sure that students are not using words to discuss inappropriate matters or insult each other.
- Make sure students are using words correctly.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Partner **ELLs** with native speakers.
- Use a shorter list of words.
- Give students specific topics to discuss.

Erase a Word

Materials Needed:

- Chalk or marker
- Eraser

The Rules:

Divide students into two teams. Write two lists of unit words on the board (one for each member of each team). Each team forms a line leading to the board. When given the signal, the first child on each team goes up to the board, points at the first word in the team's column, and reads aloud that word. If the student reads the word correctly, he or she erases that word. The student then moves to the back of his or her team's line. The first team to erase all the words on their list wins.

How to Expand the Game:

- Instead of pronunciation, students could say the definition of the word, give an example of the word, correct a misspelled word, etc., in order to erase it.

Look Out For:

- Make sure students in line don't call out the answers.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Review the pronunciation of words before the game begins.

Vocab Shot

Materials Needed:

- Foam basketball and hoop (or paper wad and recycling bin)
- List of words for teacher

The Rules:

Divide the class into two teams. Each member of the team is asked a vocabulary question (definition, spelling, pronunciation, etc.). If the student gets the answer right, he wins a point for his team, and he has the chance of getting another question if he's able to make a basketball shot. If the student makes the shot, he's asked another question. If he gets that right, he has another chance at the basketball shot, but this time he must take a step or two back. This continues until the student misses a shot or gets a question wrong. In either case, the next question goes to the other team. After everyone has had a turn, the team with the most points wins.

How to Expand the Game:

- Each time the student earns another basketball shot, the difficulty of questions can increase. For instance, the first question could be spelling, the second question could be a definition, etc.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- You can vary the level of difficulty for each question depending on each student's level. For instance, give spelling and pronunciation questions to students who are struggling with vocabulary, and definition and example questions to students who have already mastered spelling and pronunciation.

Circle Rotation

Materials Needed:

- List of words for each student
- Pen for each student

The Rules:

Divide class into two groups and have them form an inner and outer circle, with students facing each other. For the first 15 seconds, each student in the inner circle asks a prepared vocabulary question (about spelling, pronunciation, definition, example, etc.) to the student she is facing. If the outer-circle student answers correctly, the inner-circle student signs his word list. For the next 15 seconds, the outer-circle student asks the inner-circle student a question, and signs her sheet if she answers correctly. Then students rotate to the right and repeat the process with the new students they face. Whoever has the most signatures at the end of the game time wins.

How to Expand the Game:

- Play until everyone has reached his or her original partner.

Look Out For:

- Make sure to demonstrate different types of vocabulary questions.
- If you have an odd number of students, make one student the "supervisor" who walks around the circle to keep other students on task.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Give students one minute or more to prepare questions. They can use the same questions multiple times.
- Expand question-and-answer time to 30 seconds or a minute.

Mini Game Show

Materials Needed:

- Clues for each word

The Rules:

Divide students into two teams and give each student a number. Number 1 from each team comes to the front of the room. The teacher reads a clue related to a word (the clue could be a definition or example of the word) and the first person to slap the board or desk gets to answer. If correct, his team earns a point. If incorrect, the person from the other team has a chance to earn a point. Repeat with the following sets of students. The team with the most points wins.

How to Expand the Game:

- With further preparation, you can arrange the clues on the board according to category with varying points and difficulties, just like on TV.

Look Out For:

- Depending on your comfort level, you can prepare the clues in advance or make up clues on the spot.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Post possible words on the chalkboard.
- Have students compete from their seats rather than come to the front of the class.
- Have students compete in teams.

Charades

Materials Needed:

- Each word on a separate small piece of paper
- A basket

The Rules:

Divide students into two teams. One student from one team comes to the front of the class, chooses a word from the basket, and acts out the word without speaking. Whichever team yells out the correct word first earns a point. The next student to act out a word comes from the other team, and so on. Whichever team has the most points when time is called wins.

How to Expand the Game:

- This game can be played for a longer period of time to review for an exam. You can also include bonus words from other units for deeper review.

Look Out For:

- Make sure to have a set time period so that students feel it is fair for one team to win.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Post possible words on the chalkboard.
- Use a smaller group of words.
- Play the game in small groups, with one student acting out the word for two or three classmates.

Guess My Word

Materials Needed:

- Each word on a separate small piece of paper
- A basket

The Rules:

Divide students into two teams. One student from one team comes to the front of the class, chooses a word from the basket, and describes the word without using it. Whichever team yells out the correct word first earns a point. The next student to describe a word comes from the other team, and so on. Whichever team has the most points when time is called wins. You may wish to limit each team to two or three guesses per turn.

How to Expand the Game:

- For each word, write a list of commonly associated words that the students cannot use in their descriptions.

Look Out For:

- Make sure to have a set time period so that students feel it is fair for one team to win.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Give students the full list ahead of time and allow them to write out their clues for each word so they don't have to come up with clues on the spot.

That's Sketchy

Materials Needed:

- Each word on a separate small piece of paper
- A basket
- Chalk or marker

The Rules:

Divide students into two teams. One student from one team comes to the front of the class, chooses a word from the basket, and draws a picture representation of the word without writing any letters. Whichever team yells out the correct word first earns a point. The next student to draw a word comes from the other team, and so on. Whichever team has the most points when time is called wins. You may wish to limit each team to two or three guesses per turn.

How to Expand the Game:

- This game can be played for a longer period of time to review for an exam. You can also include bonus words from other units for deeper review.

Look Out For:

- Make sure to have a set time period so that students feel it is fair for one team to win.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Post possible words on the chalkboard.
- Use a smaller group of words.
- Play the game in small groups, with one student drawing the word for two or three classmates.

Categories

Materials Needed:

- A set of all words on small separate sheets of paper for each student

The Rules:

The teacher announces a category and students select the words that go into that category. Students with the correct words in the category win. Possible categories include:

- Nouns
- Adjectives
- Emotional words
- Put the words in alphabetical order
- Words with prefixes or suffixes
- Verbs
- Emotional words
- Temporal words
- Words with three syllables

How to Expand the Game:

- Have students explain why they put certain words in each category.

Look Out For:

- Circulate the classroom to make sure all students are engaged.
- This game works best with a large group of words.
- If students have a word that you didn't expect in a category, ask them to explain their reasoning.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Students can sort words into their own categories and then have other students guess what the category is.
- Students can work in groups.

Newspaper Detective

Materials Needed:

- Any newspaper or magazine (can use one or a few)
- Scissors

The Rules:

Hand at least one page of the newspaper or magazine to each student. Each student finds a picture or article that relates to a word from the week and cuts it out. After most students have found words, ask them to explain to the class why their picture or article relates to their word of choice.

How to Expand the Game:

- Have students write on a separate sheet of paper why this picture or article relates to their chosen word. Possibly post some on the word wall.
- Ask students to find as many articles or pictures as possible that relate to multiple words.

Look Out For:

- Try to choose sections of the newspaper with more pictures, including ads.
- Make sure to leave time for students to clean up their newspaper and magazine scraps.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Students can work in groups to find related pictures and articles.
- Students can bring in newspapers or magazines in their native language.

Word Up Baseball

Materials Needed:

- Use with Fix the Mistake or Pick the Winner for middle-school levels
- A large photocopy of each word on a separate sheet of paper
- A foam ball, tennis ball, or crumpled piece of paper

The Rules:

Divide students into two teams and create a baseball diamond in your classroom (or go outside if possible). The teacher is the pitcher. Each member of team 1 takes a word and stands in the infield and outfield. Team 2 stands in line at home plate. The teacher asks a question from Fix the Mistake or Pick the Winner and then tosses the ball to the batter. The batter says the correct word and then throws the ball to the correct word. The team earns one point if the batter says the correct word and two points if he or she hits the correct word. After three incorrect words (strikes), the teams switch. The game ends when the teacher calls time or when all questions are complete.

How to Expand the Game:

- You can create additional questions to play this game beyond workbook exercises.
- To review, students can complete the exercises in their workbooks after the game.
- If playing outside, you can increase difficulty by playing with a bat.

Look Out For:

- Make sure to use a soft ball (not a softball) so it doesn't hurt any students.

Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs:

- Students can complete exercises in their workbooks before the game starts.