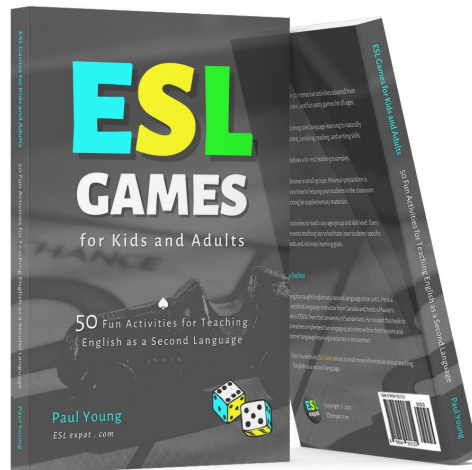


10 Free ESL Activities

from the book...



ESL Games for Kids and Adults: 50 Fun Activities for Teaching English as a Second Language

Alibi

This is a simplified version of the detective board game Alibi. Students need to find out who committed a fictional crime by interrogating suspects in the class. It is somewhat challenging and typically requires more class time than other games.

Preparation

Think of a hypothetical crime scene to present to your students. If you prefer, beforehand, write a short paragraph that is approximately five sentences. You can customize the paragraph and match it to your students' reading level.

Teacher Example

Describe the crime scene and write your paragraph on the board:

Last night, a small grocery store was robbed. All of the money was taken from the cash register. Unfortunately, the camera surveillance system malfunctioned so there was no recording of the robbery. The suspects are unknown. However, the police have determined that the culprits of the crime could be in this classroom.

Since this activity is for more advanced learners, we will focus on the students' tasks instead of modeling a lengthy example during class time.

Student Tasks

After explaining the crime scene, select two students to be the suspects.

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

Outside of the classroom, the two student suspects prepare their story. They should make sure that the story matches (with specific details) and be ready for interrogation.

Inside the classroom, divide the remaining students into two groups: police officers and detectives.

Both groups should prepare a list of 10 questions to ask the two suspects.

The groups will then interrogate each suspect with their question lists. The goal for each group is to find holes in the suspects' stories. If the stories match, then they are innocent of the crime.

On the other hand, if the suspects have different answers to the questions, then they will be found guilty.

In some cases, one group could find the suspects to be innocent, while the other group could determine them to be guilty. If this occurs, then the group who found the suspects to be guilty could be awarded a prize for being the better interrogators.

Teaching Tip

To increase participation, divide the class into smaller groups of four. This way, you can have two suspects, one police officer, and one detective. The smaller group size will allow everyone to have more opportunities to talk and use the target language.

Apples to Apples

This is an adaptation of the award-winning card game Apples to Apples. The game consists of two types of cards: nouns and adjectives. In this version, students create customized cards in class before playing the actual game.

Preparation

Before class, cut up several small rectangles of paper. The students will write on them in class to create their own Apples to Apples cards.

Teacher Example

Draw several rectangles on the board to represent the “noun” cards. Then, draw two faces to symbolize Student A and Student B. Next to each face, draw three rectangles to represent the “adjective” cards. The students hold the following adjectives:

Student A: strong, beautiful, wealthy

Student B: intelligent, delicious, enormous

Circle one of the noun cards. For instance, the noun could be something like “ice cream.”

Ask the class which adjective from the students’ cards best describes ice cream. Most likely, everyone would select “delicious” as the best match.

As a result, Student B would get a point. For a bonus point, Student B needs to create a sentence with the noun and the matching adjective.

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

For instance, they could say, “Chocolate ice cream is the most delicious ice cream in the world!”

Student Tasks

Now that the students understand the rules of the game, divide the class into small groups.

Hand out the blank paper cards and have the students create a stack of noun cards and a stack of adjective cards. Give them five minutes to create their customized cards.

Once completed, tell them to swap their card stacks with another group in the class.

Finally, every group plays Apples to Apples with the new cards.

Teaching Tip

To increase the difficulty of the game, encourage the students to explain why they think their adjective is better than their classmates’ adjectives. If their explanation is extremely convincing and creative, then they score extra points.

Axis and Allies

The aim of this classic board game is to conquer the world by asking and answering trivia-based questions about countries. Students create their own questions by researching the information online, then play the game together in class.

Preparation

Prepare a few example questions relating to world geography and culture. Get some dice or download a dice app on your smartphone. Also, access to a projector would be useful for displaying a world map on the board.

Teacher Example

Display a large map of the world on the board. If you don't have a projector, you can draw your own map.

With your marker, divide the map into six continents: North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. Include Antarctica if you have more than six teams.

Draw three fighter jets and three tanks on each continent. The jets are used for attacking other regions while the tanks are for defending the home/captured regions.

Also, add some "flight path" spaces between the continents. The fighter jet pieces travel on these spaces by rolling the dice.

First, tell the class where your home region is. For this example, we will use North America.

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

Roll the dice and move one of your fighter jets a few spaces along the flight path towards South America.

Then, ask a student to roll the dice for South America. Perhaps the dice lands on a 6. Move the South American jet all the way into Canada.

On the board, write a multiple-choice question about the country.

1. Where is Canada's largest shopping mall located?
 - a) Montreal
 - b) Toronto
 - c) Edmonton
 - d) Vancouver

Ask the student to guess the correct answer. If they say the correct answer, then they destroy one of North America's tanks. However, if they choose the incorrect answer, they lose their jet.

For this question, the correct answer is (c) Edmonton, where the West Edmonton Mall is located.

After demonstrating a few more moves and example questions, the students should have a better understanding of how to play. Finally, explain that the goal of the game is to destroy the other teams' pieces to conquer the world.

Student Tasks

Divide the class into six teams. This way, every team should now have a designated continent for their home base.

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

In their teams, the students must create a list of multiple-choice questions about their home region. They can use their smartphone to research the questions and answers.

This should take some time, so give them about 10 to 20 minutes to complete the task. Dividing the work amongst the team members will help speed up the process.

After the teams have finished writing their questions, begin the game.

Every team rolls the dice and strategically moves across the map, attacking the opposing teams' tanks and jets.

Again, for every correct answer, the attacking team destroys the opposition's game piece. However, for every incorrect answer, the attacking team loses their game piece.

The war ends and peace is declared when only one team remains on the map.

Teaching Tip

To simplify the game, the students can create true/false questions instead of multiple-choice. If you have time restraints, use half of the world map and divide the class into fewer teams. For example, one team could be North America and the other could be South America.

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

Balderdash

In the game of Balderdash, students create definitions of unusual words alongside their true definitions. Students earn points if someone else in the class picks their definition and double points if they guess the correct definition.

Preparation

Prepare a list of difficult words that you think most of your students will *not* know. If your students are advanced, search online for “Balderdash words” to get some ideas.

Teacher Example

On the board, write a strange word that none of your students will know the meaning of. For instance, write the word “scuppernong.” Say that the word is a noun, but nothing more.

Ask the class if they can select the correct definition of the word from the following definitions:

- a) an insect from South Africa
- b) a sweet yellow grape from the United States
- c) a medicinal tea from India

The students discuss what they think the answer is with a partner for a minute. Then, ask a few people what they believe is the correct answer.

Tell them that the correct answer is letter B. A scuppernong is a sweet yellow grape from the United States.

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

To clarify the game's reward system, give a point to anyone who guessed correctly and give yourself a point if anyone guessed answers A or C.

Student Tasks

Divide the class into small groups and make sure that they have some paper to write on. Assign one writer for each group. They can take turns writing for each round.

Write your list of Balderdash words on the board. Circle one word and tell the students to create a definition for it. Give them about three minutes to complete the task. Also, tell them to put their team's name on their paper.

While they are writing, you write the correct definition of the word on a separate piece of paper. Then, collect the papers so that you have all of their definitions. Read each definition aloud and ask them to choose which one they think is correct.

Give two points to any team that selects the real definition. Give one point to any team that has their fictional definition selected by an opposing team.

Teaching Tip

If the students have a lower level of vocabulary, simply shorten the definitions. For instance, for the "scuppernong" example, you could use *an insect*, *a grape*, and *tea*.

Battleship

The original Battleship game involves head-to-head naval battles between two people on a divided gameboard. In this modified version, you can use the same concept to teach various language skills in the classroom.

Preparation

Create the mini Battleship boards that each team will use to draw their ships on. Make a simple grid with five rows and five columns in a Word Doc or Google Doc. Label the rows from A to E and the columns from 1 to 5.

If you are time-constrained, bring some blank paper for students to create their own grids on.

Teacher Example

Draw a grid on the board with five rows (A to E) and five columns (1 to 5). Next to the grid, write the following:

Battleship: 3 spaces, 3 shots

Submarine: 2 spaces, 2 shots

Destroyer: 1 space, 1 shot

Tell the students that you have aligned those three invisible ships on the grid somewhere. On a separate piece of paper, draw a mini version of the grid with your ships' locations filled in. The students' goal is to locate your ships and sink them all.

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

Ask a few students to guess where a ship is located by calling out the correct row letter and column number. For instance, a student may guess “4-B” and successfully sink your battleship. On the board, cross out the three spaces where your battleship was located.

Then, to score extra points, the student must answer a question correctly in English. The question could be about grammar, pronunciation, idiomatic expressions, or any topic that you have covered in class.

Continue with the game until the students have sunk the other two ships.

Student Tasks

Divide the students into pairs (or small groups). Hand out the paper grids to everyone. Explain to the class that they should take turns trying to sink their partner’s ships.

For the first round, both players get one shot. For the second round, both players get two successive shots.

Every round thereafter, the number of successive shots they take depends on how many ships they have remaining on the board.

For example, if a student still has all three ships, then they can take six successive shots in a row. However, if they only have a submarine (2 shots) and a destroyer (1 shot), then they can only take three successive shots.

The more ships they lose, the fewer shots they can take per round.

Again, whenever they sink a ship, remind the students to ask a question in English to score bonus points.

Teaching Tip

When playing Battleship, students can use their English textbooks to find questions to ask each other for the bonus points. Alternatively, you could create a list of questions beforehand if you want them to focus on a specific language skill or topic.

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

Best Friends Challenge

This fun party game is great for practicing productive and receptive skills in English. The aim of the activity is to test students' knowledge about each other. It works best if students have known each other for a while, but you can still play it with new classmates.

Preparation

Think of a few personal questions to ask your students.

Teacher Example

Give a student volunteer a blank piece of paper. Tell the student that you will ask them a question and that they should write their answer on the paper. Remind them not to speak and only to write.

Then, ask your question. For example, "What time do you usually get up in the morning?"

The student writes their answer without showing anyone.

On your piece of paper, write what you think the student's answer is.

Show the class your piece of paper so that everyone can see the time that you guessed.

Finally, the student reveals their answer. They should say their answer using a complete sentence. For instance, "I usually get up at seven o'clock in the morning."

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

Ask the student a few more personal questions so that everyone understands the activity.

Student Tasks

Put the students into pairs. Get them to create about five questions with their partners. Inform them that they will be asking the students in other groups the questions.

After completing their question lists, start the game.

Students randomly select students around the classroom to answer a question.

The selected students write their answers on paper while everyone else in the class writes down their guesses. The students eventually reveal their answer — and say it using a complete sentence.

Finally, everyone in the class reveals their guesses on paper too. Whoever guessed correctly scores a point. You can keep track of the students' total scores on the board.

Teaching Tip

If students make any significant grammatical errors while writing or speaking, write the sentences (with the errors) on the board. At the end of the activity, correct the mistakes with the class and review the proper form.

Bingo

Improve your students' vocabulary, grammar, and other core skills in English with customized Bingo sheets. There are many free Bingo card generators online that you can use to make printouts for your classes.

Preparation

Do a Google search for “free Bingo card generator” and select your preferred generator. On the website, enter your vocabulary lists.

For instance, if you make a 5x5 Bingo card, you could enter a total of 25 adjectives. The card generator will then produce several Bingo cards that will randomly disperse the adjectives throughout the grids.

Teacher Example

Write a simple sentence on the board such as, “The girl lives in the house with her cat.”

Elicit some adjectives to make the sentence more descriptive.

For instance, “The *beautiful* girl lives in the *haunted* house with her *fat* cat.”

Next, hand out the Bingo cards to the students. Tell them that they are going to play Bingo performing the same task. If they hear the letter B, I, N, G, or O followed by whatever adjective is on their card, then they must form a sentence using the adjective.

Do a quick trial run so that they understand the rules. Call out a letter followed by a random adjective from your list, such as “G - sleepy.” If a

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

student has a match on their card, they could then say, “My friend always feels *sleepy* after eating a big meal.”

Remind them that the goal is to get five spaces in a row either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally on the Bingo card.

Student Tasks

Divide the students into small groups. Following the same structure, they can now play the game with their classmates.

Assign one person in each group to be the Bingo orator. They can use the adjectives on their Bingo sheets as a reference (or you could give them a printed list similar to yours).

After one round, they should all trade Bingo sheets to keep things fresh. Make sure that every student in each group has a chance to be the orator.

Teaching Tip

Encourage the students to challenge themselves by using a variety of sentence structures and different verb tenses. However, if they are beginners, focus on using only one verb tense to improve their confidence.

Blankety Blank

This activity is an adaptation of the comedy game show *Blankety Blank*. Students create sentences with blanks and their classmates must try to guess the missing words. You can use the activity to practice gerunds, vocabulary, sentence structures, and other English skills.

Preparation

Prepare a few example sentences with blank spaces. They can be random sentences with no particular theme or you can focus on something more specific that you would like to review.

Teacher Example

Write your sentences on the board. Here are three that you could use:

1. She didn't go to the party last night because she had to _____.
2. He loves the smell of _____ in the morning.
3. They were so _____ because they won the game.

Tell everyone to write what they think the missing word is in each sentence.

After a minute, reveal the words that you omitted and fill in the blanks.

1. She didn't go to the party last night because she had to study.
2. He loves the smell of coffee in the morning.
3. They were so excited because they won the game.

Anyone who guessed correctly would receive a point for each answer.

Student Tasks

Put the students into at least two teams. Each team creates a list of sentences with blanks. They will use these sentences to test the other teams. Give them 10 minutes to create about five sentences per team.

Start the first round. One team reads their first sentence aloud.

The students in the opposing teams listen and write what they think the word in the blank is.

After they have written their answers, the team reveals the correct word.

Anyone who guessed correctly scores a point for their team. Add up the point totals on the board and continue with the next team's sentence.

Continue playing until all of the teams' sentences have been answered.

Teaching Tip

Instead of playing the game in front of the whole class, students can play in small groups. Just make sure that you continue to monitor their progress so that they stay on task.

Box of Lies

This is an adaptation of a party game played on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. In this version of the game, students take turns describing unusual drawings while their classmates try to determine if they are lying or not.

Preparation

Have an idea of what you would like to draw on the board for your example.

Teacher Example

Draw a strange picture of a man standing on a giant pizza. He is holding a birthday cake. The cake has a large hockey stick as a candle. The flame glowing from the candle wick is in the shape of a big smiley face.

Now, look at the drawing and describe it to the class. However, when talking about it, don't describe it accurately. In fact, lie about it entirely.

For instance, say, "There is a woman standing on a tiny table. She is holding a smelly shoe. Flies are swarming around it. One fly has massive eyes shaped like apples."

After modeling the example, ask the class if your description was accurate. Everyone will agree that it is not accurate at all. Finally, elicit a true description of the drawing.

Student Tasks

Tell the students to draw a silly picture. Let them be creative and use free association to draw whatever comes to mind. Also, remind them to put their name on it when they are finished.

Collect the drawings and put them in an empty box (or folder).

Next, divide the class into small groups. Give the groups a random picture from the box. One student in every group describes the picture. They can choose to either give an accurate description or a made-up description.

It is up to the other students in the group to guess if the person is telling the truth or not.

Once they have completed the task, everyone votes. Whoever guesses correctly gets a point.

Repeat the same tasks with new pictures and a different student from each group.

The student with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Teaching Tip

Encourage the class to practice using a variety of adjectives and strong active verbs to make their sentences more descriptive. Before they start talking about the drawings, give them a few minutes to prepare, look up words in a thesaurus, and think of what they would like to say.

Cards Against Humanity

The original game of Cards Against Humanity caters more to adults. However, in this adapted version, you can use the same concept with a more family-oriented approach suitable for all ages. The goal of the game is to create funny sentences by filling in blanks with random nouns and noun phrases.

Preparation

Before class, look in a language textbook (or novel) that all of your students are reading. Take a few of the sentences from the book and prepare to use those sentences for your example.

Teacher Example

Write your example sentences on the board. Let's use these three sentences to demonstrate how to prepare for the game:

1. The therapy session was interrupted by noisy neighbors.
2. A romantic dinner would be incomplete without candles.
3. New York has lots of smelly garbage.

In each sentence, underline all of the articles, adjectives, and nouns. Replace them with a blank space and rewrite the words on the side separately. The result should look like this:

1. _____ was interrupted by _____.
2. _____ would be incomplete without _____.
3. _____ has lots of _____.

ESL GAMES FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

WORD LIST: therapy session, noisy neighbors, a romantic dinner, candles, New York, smelly garbage

Next, ask the students to create alternative sentences by filling in the blanks with the words from the list. If possible, encourage them to use each word only once.

As a result, they may come up with a rearrangement like this:

1. A romantic dinner was interrupted by smelly garbage.
2. New York would be incomplete without noisy neighbors.
3. The therapy session has lots of candles.

Student Tasks

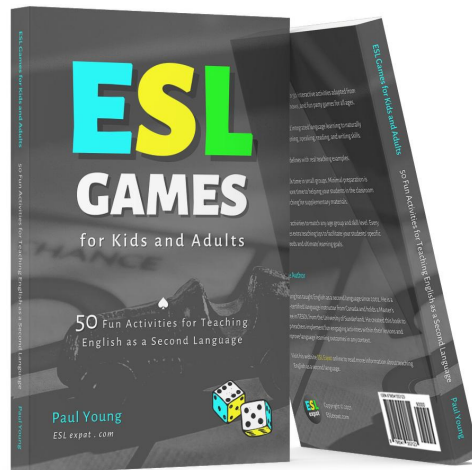
Divide the class into groups.

Tell them to look in their textbooks to find some sentences to write down on paper. They should underline all of the articles, adjectives, and nouns in the sentences. Then, rewrite the sentences with blank spaces and write the missing words on a separate piece of paper.

For the next stage, they should exchange their sentences (with the blanks) with another group of students. Finally, everyone keeps their original word lists and tries to fill in the blanks in the new sentences.

Teaching Tip

If time permits, the students can play another round of the game using the word lists from other groups. Also, remember to share some of the funniest sentences that everyone came up with before the end of class.



ESL Games for Kids and Adults: 50 Fun Activities for Teaching English as a Second Language

The book features a complete collection of 50 ESL activities, including an introduction about using games in the classroom, references, extra teaching resources, and activity materials for your students.

Order the book directly from your country's Amazon store!



Select your location:

- ▶ [United States](#) ▶ [Canada](#) ▶ [United Kingdom](#) ▶ [Australia](#)
- ▶ [Germany](#) ▶ [France](#) ▶ [Spain](#) ▶ [Italy](#) ▶ [Japan](#)

ESL EXPAT . COM