

# **Words Work: The Power of Vocabulary for Lower Level Students**

**Presenters: Julie Diter, Tamara Shepard, Michael Spears  
Grosse Pointe North High School**

**Using games as a teaching and reviewing tool:**

- ❖ **New vocabulary**
- ❖ **Recycling old vocabulary**
- ❖ **Incorporating vocabulary into context**

## **Alphabet/categories game**

This game is roughly based on Boggle. Make a transparency like the one on the next page. Choose a thematic topic. Divide students into rows, groups, etc. Once the topic is revealed, groups have 3 minutes to brainstorm relevant vocabulary. They must come up with 1 word beginning with each letter. When the 3 minutes are up, each group will read their words. If another group has the same word, they indicate so in the target language. Any groups having that word, including the readers cross it off their list. (Therefore the reading gets shorter as you progress through the groups) Write each word on the transparency so students see the old vocabulary. The group with the most words after eliminations is declared the winner.

A variant on this game is to choose a single letter, or maybe just 2 or 3 and play.

La categoría: \_\_\_\_\_

A

N

B

O

C

P

D

Q

E

R

F

S

G

T

H

U

I

V

J

X

L

Y

M

Z

# Category Add-a-Word

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*This game gives students an opportunity to review vocabulary that they know about a given topic in a fast-paced game. PLUS, the whole class must pay attention in order for their group to do well.*

## **The concept:**

The students think of as many target language words as they can that fit into a particular category.

## **What you need:**

- ◆ a blank transparency
- ◆ class seated in rows (most conducive arrangement)
- ◆ pre-determined category
- ◆ pre-determined amount of time for the game

## **How to play:**

1. Make a column for each row on the transparency in order to keep score, but leave the lower half blank so that you can write down the words the students have said.
2. Instruct the students to put away any reference material. This requires them to be creative if they run out of words!
3. Tell the class the category just before you are ready to start.
4. One at a time, each student in the first position in the rows gives a word that fits into the category. If you determine that the word is acceptable, write the word on the transparency as the student gives it. Then, put a point under that row's heading.
5. Once each student in the first position has gone, move on to the second position following the same procedure.
  - If a student repeats a word, then that row does not get a point.
  - If a student cannot think of a word within a couple seconds, then that row does not get a point.
  - If you veto the word because it does not fit the category, then that row does not get a point.
6. After a certain amount of time has passed or after you have cycled through the class a couple times (that's when they have to dig deep for interesting words!), then end the game and determine the winning row!
7. Clean the transparency for the next hour!

## **Issues to consider ahead of time:**

- ◆ How exact their pronunciation must be?
- ◆ Does the article have to be correct? Two points for accurate article?
- ◆ Whether to accept various uses of the same word? (For example, if the category is "sports" and someone says "jugar al béisbol", is plain old "jugar" still eligible?)

# Whiteboard Relay

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*This is another fast-paced vocabulary review game in which students must categorize vocabulary and that requires all students to pay attention and participate in order to succeed.*

## **The concept:**

The students use their current vocabulary words to come up with the required number of words that fit into a given category.

## **What you need:**

- ◆ one whiteboard per row
- ◆ one whiteboard marker per row
- ◆ vocabulary list
- ◆ predetermined categories

## **How to play:**

1. Tell students the number of words that you require for the first category you give them.
2. Tell them the category.
3. The first student writes down one vocabulary word that fits into that category.
4. That student passes the marker and whiteboard to the next student.
5. That student writes down another appropriate vocab word. Continue in this fashion until the number of words has been reached. The student who writes the last word holds up the whiteboard for the teacher to see.
6. If all the words make sense in the category, are legible, are spelled right, and have the accurate article, then that row gets two points for being first.
7. The next row to hold up their whiteboard with everything correct gets one point for second place.
8. The students erase and pass the board to the person who will write next.
9. When you run out of time or exhaust all your categories, count up the points and determine a winner!

## **Issues to consider ahead of time:**

- ◆ Can they use old words not currently on their vocab list?
- ◆ Have the last student run the whiteboard up to the first student or just pass it forward?
- ◆ What if they forget the articles?

## **Things to look out for during play:**

- ◆ The same student writing all the words.
- ◆ Hovering in one area instead of the authorized relay format.

# **Sentence Translation Game**

This game is a fun and competitive way to practice using vocabulary appropriately and to practice sentence structure.

## **Objective:**

Students will compete in teams to be the first to complete the translation of a sentence.

## **Needed:**

- Five or more sentences written in English on an overhead using vocabulary that you have worked on for a couple of days.
- Teams in rows
- An object that can be passed from person to person in order to keep track of play.

## **Directions:**

- Place students in teams randomly. Teams are sitting in rows. Teams are vertical.
- Play can happen vertically until the sentence is accomplished or passed or the game can be played horizontally, but the win is random.
- Uncover one sentence at a time on the overhead.
- Each player must translate the word and pass the object to the next player.

## **If playing vertically:**

- If one player in a team misses his/her word, the sentence goes to the next row until finished.
- The row that finishes the sentence wins the points for that sentence.

## **If playing horizontally:**

- If one player misses the word, the same word moves to the next player, and so on.
- The player that finishes the sentence gets the points for his her vertical team.

## **6 sentence rotation game**

Type 6 sentences, one per page. Sentences are level-appropriate for vocabulary and grammar. The rest of the page is work space.

Students are divided into 6 even groups. The groups form a circle of groups around the classroom. Give one sentence to each group face down. Using a stopwatch or classroom clock give each group 30 seconds to begin translating the sentence. After 30 seconds say “next,” or something to that extent, in your target language. Groups then pass their sentences clockwise to the next group. Another 30 seconds is given and then the sentences are passed again. The idea here is that each group gets each sentence for 30 seconds each. Once each group has had each sheet for 30 seconds apiece, call time. One representative from each group writes the final result on the board exactly as it appears on the sheet. Collect the sheets to verify that no additional editing went on at the board. (In the meantime, the rest of the class can be putting desks back.)

Sentences are then corrected by the teacher. I make each sentence worth 5 points. Therefore a total of 30 points are available (For simpler sentences, I may go with 3 or 4 points each. Adjust as necessary.) As I correct, I take off 1 or  $\frac{1}{2}$  point per error, including extra words, accent marks, etc.

You can pick whatever number seems appropriate, but the class as a whole must get x amount of points out of 30 to win. I usually go with around 25-27. Everyone wins or no one wins! I like doing this game on a Friday and making the prize no weekend homework. The reward is your call, of course.

# **Telephone with pictures**

This is a great pre-AP activity that can help prepare students for the speaking portion of the exam.

## **Objective:**

Students will describe a picture story in a describe-and-recall method resembling the game telephone.

## **Needed:**

- A picture story relating vocabulary you have been working on (pictures from the book, TPR, clip art etc.)

## **Directions:**

- Place students in rows with an equal number of pairs facing each other
- Give one row the picture, but not the facing row.
- The students with the picture have 1 minute to look at the pictures and figure out what to say. They may take notes if they wish.
- At the end of 1 minute students must begin to tell the story, trying to get through as much of the story as possible.
- Next, the row without the pictures moves back one desk and the last person in the row moves to the front. After they are all settled say “ready, begin speaking”
- Now, the row of students without the picture begins to retell the story that they heard to their new partner.
- After the story is retold, the student with the pictures shows the student retelling the story what they look like.
- After the picture is uncovered, and every one gets a good laugh, group the students in to 4s to come up with two beautiful and perfect sentences to describe one picture. Give students 5 minutes to work on it.
- In the end, have each group read aloud their picture descriptions (the two beautiful sentences) and you have a complete version of the story.



## **PowerPoint Password.**

Make a slide show of vocabulary. Put a student or a small group of students in front of the screen and let the class try to get them to say the word. No English allowed of course. No gestures, rhyming words, etc. depending on the complexity of the vocabulary. The PowerPoint works well. I occasionally let kids make their own and practice with each other. A board or projector both work well if you can't project your PowerPoints.

# Sentence Maze

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*This game also incorporates grammar concepts, but at the lower levels also focuses strongly on vocabulary. The students work in pairs during this timed game.*

## **The concept:**

The students work together in pairs to create sentences in the target language using words in touching boxes.

## **What you need:**

- ◆ sentence maze handout created by the teacher
- ◆ a transparency of the sentence maze for explaining.
- ◆ students

## **The rules:**

1. The sentences must make sense.
2. They must each be different.
3. The students must take turns writing.
4. A sentence that starts and ends in a starred box is worth two points.
5. All other sentences are worth one point.

## **How to play:**

10. Assign or allow the students to choose a partner.
11. Tell them the materials that they are allowed to have out. (This is for you to decide.)
12. Display the transparency of the sentence maze as you explain the game.
13. Pass out the handout face down and tell them not to flip over their sheet before you tell them to.
14. When you tell them to do so, they flip over the sheet and begin working. Make sure you remind them to switch writers.
15. When time is up, they must stop writing. Here are some options for calculating the points/correcting:
  - ◆ Have them trade with another pair and you lead them through the corrections
  - ◆ You collect them and score them while they are beginning homework or another independent assignment and then review problems with them

## **Issues to consider ahead of time:**

- ◆ Time limit.
- ◆ The number of points the student must get to “win”.
- ◆ How detailed you will be with your corrections.
- ◆ What resources they can use.

## **Things to look out for during play:**

- ◆ The same student writing all the sentences.

# El laberinto de frases

Nos llamamos:

|                      |                                  |                        |                       |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| *****<br>yo<br>***** | necesito                         | una carpeta            | es                    | *****<br>tú<br>***** |
| estudio              | estudiar                         | para                   | tengo<br>or<br>tienes | yo                   |
| la tarea             | la cuarta hora                   | la clase de<br>español | empieza               | a qué hora           |
| me gusta             | *****<br>todos los días<br>***** | a las once y<br>media  | ella                  | enseña               |

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_
15. \_\_\_\_\_
16. \_\_\_\_\_
17. \_\_\_\_\_
18. \_\_\_\_\_

# **Chapter Review Game: Jeopardy!**

This game is intended to be an end of the chapter review game to prepare students for their current chapter test. It engages the entire class, as teams compete for the victory of supreme knowledge!

**Objective:** Students will compete to earn the most points in a jeopardy style chapter review game.

## **Needed:**

- Three to four teams, talent evenly distributed
- Score keeper/time keeper
- Overhead transparency prepared with a jeopardy board

## **Directions:**

- This is an individual and team game
- Place teams in rows
- Start with player one on team one, play will continue through teams horizontally, each individual player taking a question.
- If a player answers a question correctly, the player gets the points.
- If the player misses the question, the player loses the number of points and the next team collectively gets a shot at the question. They can confer, but only have thirty seconds or so.
- The question is passed until a team answers it correctly. That team gets the points.
- There are two Daily Double questions for which the player can play for up to double the value of the question.
- The team that has the highest score at the end of the game wins!