

BEGINNING VOCABULARY GAMES

The following is a series of activities to teach themed vocabulary to beginners, and can be used after Total Physical Response activities.

For each of these games, you must have either a picture to represent each new word, or realia. Considering students' different affective filters and language stages, these activities move from whole class participation to asking for individual oral responses. The activities should be done quickly, with high energy.

Choral Responses

After the class has responded chorally several times, elicit responses from individuals.

1 Hot and Cold

Ask one student to close his eyes or step outside, as another student hides the word you name. As the first student searches, the class chants the name of the object loudly if he gets close to the hidden word, and softly if he goes farther away. In this modified "Hot and Cold" game, all students are actively participating and internalizing the new words.

2 Identify the number

Line up pictures of the new words and place numbers on or above them. Say a word and ask students to tell you its number. Then make it more challenging by switching roles. Say the number and ask students to tell you the word.

3 What's Missing?

Line up several pictures of the new words. Ask students to close their eyes, and take one picture away. Ask, "What's missing?" Continue with the rest of the pictures.

4 Differentiating Questions

Vary the type of questions you ask, according to students' different stages of language acquisition. Invite four volunteers to the front of the class and hand each one a picture of a new word, or actual objects. The following questions range from expecting a simple yes-no answer, to expecting the student to understand all four answer options and produce the correct one.

- a) Does Maria have **the book**?
- b) Does Andre have **the book** or **the notebook**?
- c) Who has **the pencil**?
- d) What does Lian have?

Individual Responses

5 Grab Bag

Place objects or pictures representing the new words in a big bag. The students don't know what's in the bag, so you can exaggerate the element of mystery and surprise. Go around the class, asking students to pull something out and say what it is.

6 What Am I?

Invite a student to volunteer and clip a picture/word to her back. She can't see what she is, but the class can. The student keeps asking the class what she is until she has the right answer. For example:

"Am I a snake?"
 "No!"
 "Am I a turtle?"
 "No!"
 "Am I a spider?"
 "Yes!"

7 Seven Up

Invite seven students to the front of the class and give each one a picture of a new word. This is similar to the traditional game "Heads Up, Seven Up." The rest of the class puts their heads down, eyes closed, and thumbs up. Each of the seven students tags someone on the thumb and returns to the front of the class. Then tell the class to open their eyes. The seven tagged students try to guess who tagged them, but instead of saying their names, they identify the students by the words they are holding.

8 Stepping Stones

In this game, individual students are expected to identify and produce all of the new words. Lay several pictures down on the floor. Tell the class that they are stepping stones across a river. To cross the river, they must step on (or next to) each "stone" and correctly say its name. If they make a mistake, they must begin again.