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Fun activities for teaching english

For language learners, speaking is often the most daunting yet crucial skill to master. Many might feel anxious about making mistakes or being judged by their peers. To overcome these fears, incorporating English games and activities into lessons can be a game-changer. Here are 15 effective English Speaking games and activities that we've researched and tested in our classrooms, suitable for students of all levels, ages, and backgrounds. These engaging activities, such as the "Yes/No" game or "Call My Bluff," can be scaled to meet individual needs, promoting maximum participation and language retention. To create a risk-free environment, it's essential to show students that mistakes are natural and acceptable, just like in everyday life. For adult learners, highlighting their motivations for learning English and how it will benefit them in real-life situations can help alleviate initial fears. Emphasizing the importance of speaking in various contexts, such as careers, social occasions, or travel, can also make a significant impact. What's common among students of all ages? We all enjoy having fun! These games below can be adapted to suit Kindergarten classrooms or boardroom training sessions, offering something for every situation. Introduce the activity by explaining that the focus will shift towards developing speaking and presenting skills, making it a fun and engaging practice session. Start by asking how long 30 seconds is and whether it's a long time. Then, reveal that students will be tasked with talking about something they know for 30 seconds, having only one minute to prepare. You can choose to have students work individually or in teams, depending on the class size. As you circulate around the room, give each student a chance to practice speaking for 30 seconds. Provide the rules and split the class into two halves: 1. Pick a subject 2. Talk for 30 seconds 3. No hesitation or repetition (be lenient with this) 4. If they can't finish their time, the other team gets a chance to complete it 5. If they do finish, they earn points instead Adaptations include adjusting the speaking time and topics based on student age and abilities. You can also run the activity as a whole class or make it competitive by having teams work together. This game is similar to those found in puzzle magazines, requiring students to fill out a table with information about Downing Street residents. They must ask their peers for answers, only receiving one clue at a time. Once they have all the information, you can review the answers as a class and discuss what was learned. This activity encourages speaking and listening skills among ESL students and others. To play, distribute the table worksheet, clues, and additional copies if needed (depending on class size). Ensure that students don't read each other's clues and encourage them to start filling out their tables once they have enough information. The aim of this activity is for students to speak with each other rather than just following instructions. As a bonus, teachers get to act as facilitators instead of standing at the front all the time. Adaptations can be made by addin clues or using a script, which helps lower level students who need more support. Resources include a town map and place names for students to pick from. The activity involves choosin a student to come up with directions to build somethin in another part of the classroom. Their team has to follow their instrukshuns without knowin the actual destination. This game gives students the chance to practice speakin, listenin, and readin at the same tim. Another problem teachers face is gettin students to put emotion into their speech. To solve this, we've created a worksheet with sentences that require expression. The word "expression" is explained to students, includin its relation to facial expressions and intonation. A video example of a boring voice and a dramatic voice is shown to highlight the importance of expression in English. Students are given the worksheets and asked to work out how to say each sentence more naturalli. They're reminded to use not only expression in their voice but also in their face. The activity demonstrates how difficult it can be to sound sad when lookin happy, and vice versa. Facial expressions can make speaking English easier by adding emotion and feeling to speech. The class should work together on some phrases, then choose a student to perform them while acting out different emotions written on the board. To make it more fun, write random sentences like "I have won the lottery" next to emotions such as "sad" or "happy". The students then say the phrase with the specified emotion, and the class tries to guess which emotion they're trying to act out. This game is a great way for ESL students to develop fluency and sound more natural. For instance, if a student says "I won the lottery but I'm sad," it means their tone should be somber despite winning something good. The teacher can repeat this exercise with other phrases and ask the class to come up with correct responses to sentences like "My cat died" or "I got into college." To take it further, give out a worksheet where students work in pairs to write the correct response to different sentences. Then, have them practice saying the phrases while acting out emotions, making sure their tone and facial expressions match. There are also two blank spaces at the bottom of the sheet for students to come up with their own sentences and responses. The teacher can also create a game where students try to come up with the incorrect response to a sentence, like saying "congratulations" when someone's pet died. This English speaking game is suitable for all ages, from kindergarten to business professionals, and is an excellent way to practice responding to different situations in English. The game involves two students at a time who are given a word by the teacher, then they must say a related word within three seconds or less without repeating, pausing, or saying something unrelated. If they fail, they receive a 'bonk' on the head and can be replaced after three bonks. This is similar to the TV show Call My Bluff, where contestants guess who is lying. Instead, students try to guess whose wish it belongs to by reading a wish from a bag and giving a reason why they think that. This game can be adapted for various levels of English learners. For second-language or ESL students, it can be played at a slower pace, and instead of using a 'bonk' on the head, players can be given points or other rewards. The teacher can also participate in the game and play against the students. In another version of this game, students are given three wishes to make, with one being for their family, one for their friends, and one for making the world a better place. They have to write down their wishes without giving away who they belong to. The class then tries to guess whose wish belongs to each student. Adaptations of this game include using it as an icebreaker activity where students write three things about themselves, two true statements, and one lie, for others to guess. This creates a fun and creative way for students and the teacher to get to know each other. Looking to engage younger ESL students and learners with an interactive activity, consider modifying this game to suit their needs. Regardless of skill level, everyone can participate in the Yes/No Game. Observe the video demonstration featuring skilled native speakers who pose challenging questions while speaking rapidly. Although it's ideal for students with a basic ability, you can adjust the difficulty by creating tailored questions. To introduce the game, write "Yes/No" questions on the board and explain that each student must respond without using yes/no, nodding their head, or making other affirmative noises. This may seem simple but requires focus from the students. During the activity, pause between participants to maintain order and provide an opportunity for students to reflect. The game serves as excellent practice in adding language to answers, allowing students to develop their communication skills. As the teacher takes on a facilitative role, it's essential to create opportunities for students to take turns asking questions and observing the responses of their peers. Some effective strategies include: * Starting questions with "do you," "can you," or "will you" to catch students off guard. * Repeating student answers and adding yes/no to assess their ability to recognize verbal cues. This game has proven to be an excellent way to promote communication among students, reducing pressure in a large class environment and fostering risk-taking with English speaking. By using simple pictures and having each partner draw and replicate the image, this activity encourages students to think creatively about expanding their phrases and adding more details to their language. Partner or another class member tries to guess who is on a paper by asking yes/no questions. It's an entertaining English-speaking game that tests questioning skills, perfect for breaking the ice between students or at the start of term. The game also helps practice speaking skills, and you can adapt it for any level or age group. After the game, take time to correct any mistakes students made while playing. With older groups, you can have fun learning more about your students. Write three statements about yourself on the board, two being lies and one true. Students ask questions about each statement and try to guess which is true. If they get it right, they win! For an extension, have students write their own two truths and one lie, pair up, and play again with their new partner. To take it further, rotate partners or run the game as a whole class activity. Afterward, have each student share something new they learned about another student. This game can be adapted to any vocabulary or topic you're teaching. In the university version, stick Post-It Notes to students' foreheads and have them guess who they are. For ESL classrooms, use Post-Its with terms, problems, or vocabulary and have students walk around asking questions to figure out what's on their note. This game works for all ages! I've been thinking about games that are perfect for parties and celebrations. There's something special about them, maybe because they bring people together in a way that other activities can't. I'm writing this just after Christmas, so I might be biased towards party games. However, I think it's more than that - these games genuinely work, and everyone from young to old loves having fun. One game that stands out is Taboo. It's incredibly simple: you have a deck of cards with one target word and four related words underneath. The player has to describe the target word without using the words on the card. This game adapts easily to any topic, making it suitable for students of various ages and abilities in both ESL and native speaking classrooms. Taboo is perfect as a warm-up or end-of-class activity, requiring minimal preparation - just a bean bag and some creativity. It's similar to another popular game, Mallets Mallet Word Association, but involves the whole class instead of pairs at the front. In this game, students stand in a circle and when you throw a bean bag or ball, they have to catch it and say something related to the topic. They then pass the ball to another student, who must come up with a different word within that category. If they fail or repeat themselves, they sit out until the next round. This game is incredibly engaging for students of all ages and can be easily adapted. After a few rounds, you can even let them choose their own topics. To access more ESL games and activities like these, check out the links provided below or download the complete PDF file for a small fee - it's worth every penny! The idea behind these games is simple yet powerful: students learn better when they're having fun. By incorporating games like these into your lessons, you'll find that your students are more willing to engage and practice the language you're teaching them. Now's the perfect time to share what I've learned and resources I've curated! Here, we're not just about teaching theory or sharing our thoughts, but also providing you with the practical tools you need for your class or children. Need some inspiration to make learning fun in your TEFL classroom? Want quick and easy games for teaching English to kids? You've come to the right place! This blog was written by Ciara, a seasoned TEFL teacher who's put these games to the test herself. So, pick your favorite and thank her later! 1. Name Games: A great way to start a lesson, especially at the beginning of the year when you need to get to know your students' names! Have the kids introduce themselves, sharing their name and a favorite thing. The next child must then introduce the previous one, and so on until everyone remembers each other's names. 2. Charades: A crowd-pleaser with kids of all ages! Use flashcards or cut-out words for this game. Secretly show a student a word or picture, then have them act it out while their classmates try to guess what it is. It gets super competitive and hilarious! 3. Pictionary: Similar to charades, but instead of acting, students draw the secret word on a whiteboard. Kids love using markers and showing off their artistic skills. 4. Stand Up If You...: Best with larger groups and an open space (perfect for outdoor activities!). Form a circle with the kids and you in the center. Call out instructions like "stand up if you're wearing shorts" and have everyone switch places while trying to steal each other's spots. The child left in the middle gets to call out the next instruction. This game adapts easily to vocabulary topics like appearance, clothing, likes/dislikes, family members, or holidays. 5. Guess the Flashcard: A simple yet effective game! Hold flashcards and slowly reveal them one by one while students guess what they are. The child who guesses correctly gets to keep the card, and the one with the most cards at the end wins! 6. Slam: Another flashcard game perfect for small groups! Place all the flashcards face down and have students take turns flipping one over to try and get rid of their own cards. The goal is to be the first player to get rid of all their cards. Need some engaging flashcards to use with your class? Check out our ready-made ones! To play this game, start by calling out a word and having the kids gather around you. Then, say the name of the flashcard and have them slam their hands onto it if they think it's correct. The child whose hand is at the bottom gets to win! To avoid any confusion, tell them to keep their hands on their heads until you call out a word. You can use pre-made flashcards for this game. Get ready for a fun and interactive word-guessing game where students try to figure out the selected word letter by letter. A twist? When they make a mistake, instead of drawing body parts, you draw snowman parts - a total of nine, including a sad face that signals game loss! Make it a quick warm-up activity to keep student engagement high. This game is perfect for Christmas or winter-themed events and can be played in no time. We're sure you're eager to start! Need help finding your TEFL job? Check out LoveTEFL's jobs board and apply today! Or, explore our paid internships for a supported path to your first role. Still seeking certification before applying? Our TEFL courses or free consultation with an expert can guide you through the process. Take our course matching quiz to find the perfect fit for you. Happy teaching!