

A-Z of teaching young learners: Games

What and why?

Games are a very important part of a successful route to language learning for young learners. They are useful in a number of ways: in maintaining motivation, in giving a natural context for using English and in providing variety within a lesson.

Practical ideas

- While the children will enjoy the 'game' aspect of the activity, it is important that they understand that it is not just for fun. Before you start a game, explain how it will help them to learn. For example, 'We can play a game now. This will help you remember the new words'.
- The Extra activities section in the Teacher's Book includes some games that you can play with the class, and some notes on using games. A reference to a suitable game is given in the teaching notes for many units.
- It is important to ensure that all the children understand how to play the game. Explain in English and the mother tongue, and then get the children to tell you how to play. Also, demonstrate with some children in front of the class.
- After you have played a game successfully, you can ask the children to suggest variations on the game, or to suggest new games. You could have a 'suggestion box' in class for this.
- Include a game in different parts of the lesson – not always at the end. A game shouldn't be seen as a 'reward' for hard work, but another way of learning.
- After the children have played a game, ask them if they liked it, how they could play it better, or how they would improve on it.
- Board games are a useful way of revising language. You can ask the children to make their own – for example, they could make a board game similar to the ones in the Revision sections in the Pupil's Book.

Games can get out of hand! It is important to make sure that the children don't get too excited, or you may find that you have discipline problems which will destroy something that is intended to be enjoyable. When they are playing a game, go around the class and maintain a lively but purposeful atmosphere. If some children become extremely noisy, stop the game and calm them down.