

Lowering ESL Student Anxiety with Game-like Activities

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Research

- Stephen Krashen: affective filter hypothesis
- Penny Ur: game-like activities
- John Comings: part of a community

Make activities game-like by:

- Giving points
- Giving a time limit
- Making it a race
- Dividing class into teams
- Giving a small prize
- Saying there will be a winner

A. Class Building Game

- 1) Learning names (L,S,R,W) p. 2



B. Moving Activities

- 1) Fly Swatter Game (L,W) p. 2
- 2) Give One, Get One (L,S,W) p. 3
- 3) Dictation Relay (L,S,R,W) p. 3
- 4) Scrambled Questions (L,S,R,W) p. 3
- 5) Conversation Cards (L,S) p. 4

C. Group Seated Activities

- 1) Chain Stories (L,S) p. 5
- 2) Unscramble (L,S,R) p. 6



D. Dice Games

- 1) Conversation Practice (L,S) p. 7
- 2) Questions (L,S) p. 8 Template p. 9
- 3) Vocabulary Dice Game (L,S) p. 10
- 4) Numbered Heads (L,S,R,W) p. 10



Common Activities Made More Game-Like

- 1) Crossword puzzle (It's a race--which pair can solve the puzzle the quickest?)
- 2) Word scramble (The group that unscrambles the words the fastest wins!)
- 3) Word search (The first pair who solves the word search wins! Winners discuss vocabulary while others are finishing.)

Class Builder: Students learning each other's names

Procedure:

- 1) Hand out a blank piece of paper – 8 ½ X 11.
- 2) Ask students to fold up one corner so that a rectangular remains.
- 3) Tear off the rectangular piece.
- 4) Ask students to write their names (first and last) on the rectangular piece and then fold it in half.
- 5) Collect the folded name strips. Put them in a bag.
- 6) With the remaining square piece of paper, have students fold it in thirds. Then have them fold it again in thirds so that when you open it up, it has 9 squares. This will be a bingo grid.
- 7) Next model the activity of asking a student his or her name and then writing it in one of the squares on the grid. Model the language needed for the task, e.g. “What’s your name?” “How do you spell that?” “ Nice to meet you.”
- 8) Have students circulate to 9 different students, getting names to fill 9 boxes on their grids.
- 9) Play a game of bingo as follows:
 - a. Draw a name out of the bag that contains the rectangular name strips. Announce the name.
 - b. If a student has that name on their grid, he or she can circle it or put an “x” on the box. The goal is to get 3 names in a row – vertically, horizontally, or diagonally.
 - c. Ask the student to stand whose name is drawn. This is an opportunity to introduce the student to the whole class and the whole class to welcome that student to the class.
 - d. Then draw another name out of the bag.
 - e. The first student to get 3 names in a row shouts “Bingo.”
 - f. Give a little prize to winning students.

By Gretchen Bitterlin, San Diego Community College

Fly Swatter Game

Procedure:

- 1) Write 10-15 irregular verbs on the board.
- 2) Divide the class into two groups. Have the students line up into two groups.
- 3) Hand the front person of each group a fly swatter. Give the simple present of a verb.
- 4) The front person of each group finds the irregular verb on the board and hits it with the fly swatter.
- 5) The person who hits it first wins a point for their team. Each person should hand the fly swatter to the next person in line.
- 6) The team with the most points wins.

Give One, Get One

Procedure:

- 1) Ask students to individually start a list (something you have been studying in class), such as:
 - things found in the classroom
 - activities done over the weekend
 - names of food
- 2) After a few minutes ask students to compare their lists to a classmate's list.
- 3) From their classmate's list they must give each other an item they hadn't thought of and take an item they hadn't had before.
- 4) After giving and getting ideas, students move on to other classmates.
- 5) Rewards can be given for the longest lists.

From Kagen and 50 Stimulating Classroom Starters

Dictation Relay

Procedure:

- 1) Teacher posts a list of words or sentences on the wall in several places.
- 2) Students are divided into groups of 4. Each student has a job.
Student #1: Runner Student #2: Repeater
Student #3: Checker Student #4: Timekeeper
- 3) One member of each group (the runner) goes to the wall to read the word or sentence. The other group members stay seated. The runner only reads one sentence.
- 4) The runners must then walk back to the group and dictate what they read to their group--no yelling! If necessary, the runner goes back to the wall to check.
- 5) Students alternate jobs. Student #1 becomes #2, #2 becomes #3, etc., so everyone has a chance to be the runner.
- 6) The student checker checks the papers as they write or at the end.
- 7) The first to complete all the words or sentences accurately wins.

Scrambled Questions

Procedure:

- 1) Teacher writes each word from a question on a separate piece of large paper.
- 2) Teacher says a sentence. Students think of the question. This must be a review of questions and answers that have been studied.
- 3) Students make a line in front of the class holding up their papers in the correct order of the question.
- 4) Or, students make a line in front of the class in scrambled order and the students who are seated direct the location of each student holding a word.

Lesson **C**

What are you doing right now?

Conversation cards

- A** Everyone takes a card.
- B** Find a classmate. Ask your question. Your classmate answers. Change cards.
- C** Find another classmate. Ask your new question. Your classmate answers. Change cards again.

What are you wearing today?	What are you doing right now?	What do you do every Sunday?	What do you drink every morning?
What do you usually eat for dinner?	What do you do every afternoon?	What do you usually wear to class?	What am I wearing today?
What is the teacher doing right now?	What time do you usually go to bed?	What do you usually do after class?	What do you do every day?
What do you usually do every night?	What do you usually watch on TV?	What do you usually do on Friday?	What is the teacher wearing today?

Lesson **E** *Writing*

Chain story

- A** Work in a group. Cut out the cards. Put the cards face up.
 - B** One person chooses a card and uses the word or words to start a story. Keep the card.
 - C** The next person chooses a card and continues the story. Keep the card.
 - D** Continue until you finish the story.
- A** My *goal* is to open a business.
B I have to take four *steps* to reach this goal.

goal	want to	steps
need to	business	a vocational course
go to college	make money	learn
study	skills	college counselor

Lesson **D** *Reading*

Unscramble

A Work with a partner. Cut out the strips. Mix them up. Put the story in the correct order.

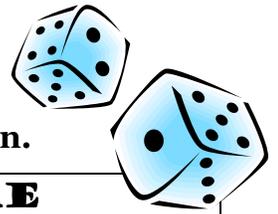
B Then answer the questions.

1. What is Adela's goal? _____
2. What does Adela need to study? _____
3. What is the last thing Adela will do? _____

1) My name is Adela Leon.
My goal is to become a nurse.
I need to take three steps to become a nurse.
First, I need to learn more English.
I will do my English homework and practice every night.
Second, I need to go to nursing school.
I will need to study hard in nursing school.
Third, I need to find a good nursing job.
I know I can do it!

Roll the Dice Conversation Practice

Roll the dice once; find the category below. Roll the dice a second time, and find the specific question # in that category. Talk about the question.



<p style="text-align: center;">1 FEELINGS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What kind of weather do you like? Why? 2. What do you enjoy doing when you have spare time on the weekends? 3. Talk about a moment recently when you felt especially happy. What happened? 4. What makes you feel frightened? 5. What do you do to handle stress? 6. Talk about a moment recently when you felt thrilled, excited, or especially happy. What happened? 	<p style="text-align: center;">2 LEISURE ACTIVITIES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe your favorite meal. 2. What is your favorite restaurant? 3. What is your favorite kind of music? Do you listen to different types of music depending on your mood? 4. What is your favorite place to go in your city? Why? 5. What is your favorite movie? Why? 6. What is your favorite television program? Why?
<p style="text-align: center;">3 FRIENDS & FAMILY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many brothers and sisters do you have? Where do they live? 2. Who was the most influential person in your life when you were a child? 3. Who is your favorite relative? Describe this person. 4. Do you have any friends from other cultures or other countries? Describe one of them. 6. Describe your hometown. What is something you really miss about it? 	<p style="text-align: center;">4 EDUCATION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did you decide to enroll in classes here? How did you learn about this school? 2. How often do you speak and listen to English outside the classroom? In what situations or with whom do you speak? 3. What is a future educational goal that you have? 4. What is a future work-related goal that you have? 5. Would you rather practice grammar or vocabulary during English class? Why? 6. How often do you read and write English outside the classroom? Where do you do that?
<p style="text-align: center;">5 DECISIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talk about a time recently when you had to make an important decision. 2. Do you have any bad habits that you would like to quit or give up? Explain. 3. Do you plan to live the rest of your life in the U.S.? or would you like to return to your native country someday? 4. Do you plan to stay in this city? What is a benefit or advantage to living in this city? What is a disadvantage of living here? 5. What is a big purchase you plan to make? 	<p style="text-align: center;">6 WORK & TRAVEL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Would you rather visit Alaska or Hawaii? Why? 2. Would you rather have a part-time or full-time job right now? Explain. 3. Would you rather live in an urban area or in the suburbs? 4. Would you rather visit New York City or San Francisco? Explain your choice. 5. Would you rather live near the ocean or in the mountains? Explain. 6. Would you rather work with people or machines? Give an example of your ideal job.

6. Why did you decide to come to this city?

Adapted from Beth Bogage

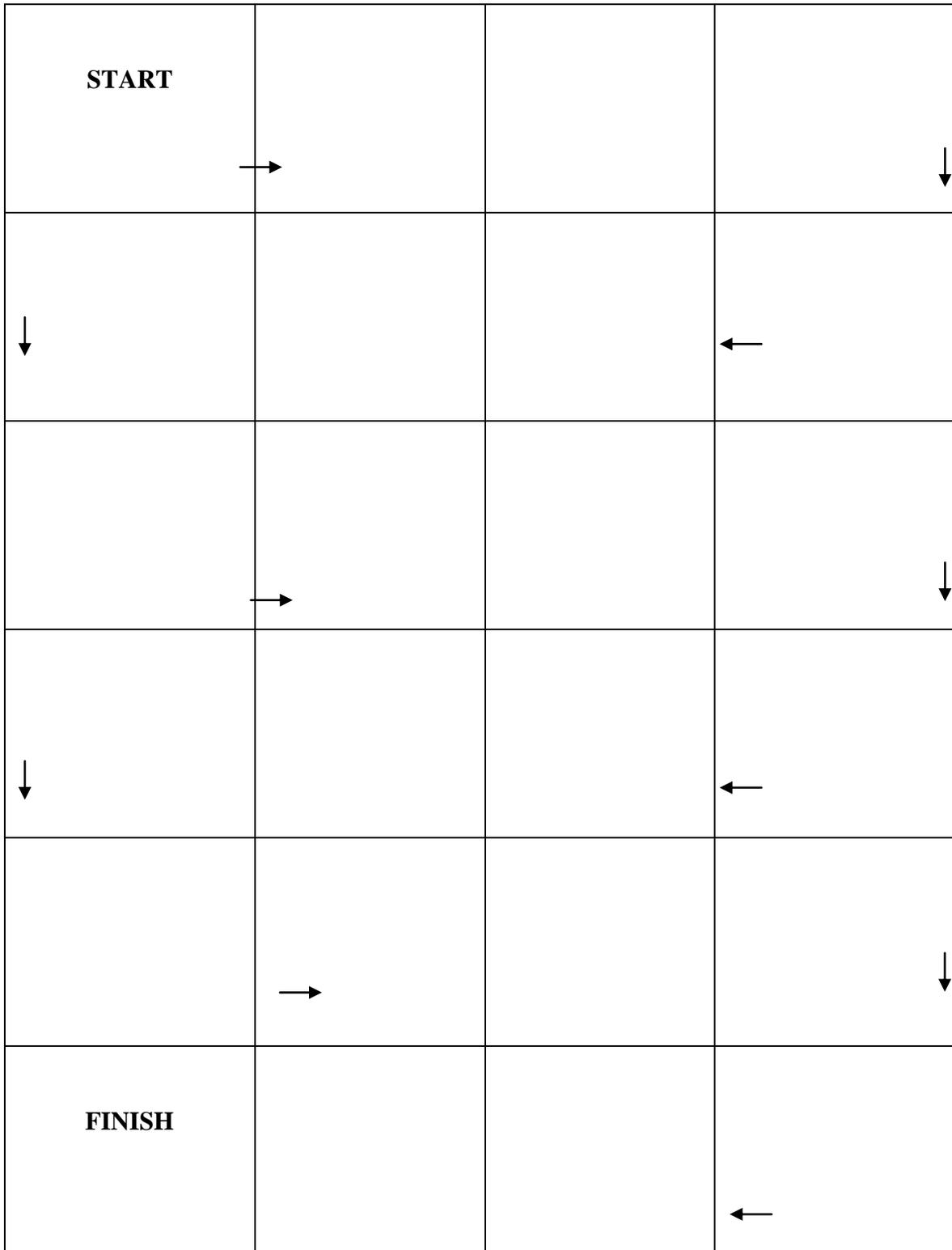
Questions Board Game

Procedure:

- 1) 2-4 students put markers on the start. In groups, take turns rolling the die. The person with the highest number begins.
- 2) Roll the die again. Student moves the marker to the correct place. Student reads the question out loud and answers it.
- 3) Student gives the die to the person sitting on the right. The person who gets to the finish first wins!

START	What do you like to do in your free time? →	How many cups of coffee do you drink a day?	What do you like to watch on TV? ↓
How often do you go to the cinema? ↓	How often do you have English classes?	Where do you eat your breakfast at home?	Where do you go for walks? ←
Where do you go shopping?	What do you like to eat? →	Where does your best friend live?	Where do you go during the weekends? ↓
Where do you go for holidays? ↓	What do you do on Friday nights?	How do you get to school?	How often do you wash your hair? ←
What clothes do you like to wear for school?	How often do you see your friends? →	What time do you get up on Sunday mornings?	How many hours do you work every day? ↓
FINISH	Where do you work?	Where do you go to relax?	How much time do you take to do your homework? ←

Board Game Template



Vocabulary Dice Game

Procedure:

- 1) Teacher makes handout with instructions on what each number on the dice means.
- 2) Teacher makes vocabulary cards.
- 3) Divide the class into groups.
- 4) Give each group a die and instruction paper.
- 5) Go over the instructions and give an example.
- 6) Students take turns tossing the die. Then they take a vocabulary card. Depending on their die, they have to either:
 - 1 on the die: act it out
 - 2 on the die: draw a picture of the word
 - 3 on the die: create a sentence using the vocabulary word
 - 4 on the die: create a question to ask the group using the vocabulary word
 - 5 on the die: explain the vocabulary word w/o using the actual word and the group guesses the word.

From 50 Stimulating Classroom Activities

Numbered Heads

Procedure:

- 1) This works with anything numbered, for example, a list of questions after a reading passage.
- 2) Students sit in groups of 4-6.
- 3) Students number off in their groups.
- 4) All team members must answer all the questions.
- 5) Team members must discuss the questions and agree on the answers.
- 6) The teacher rolls the die. The student who has that number must answer the question.

From Spencer Kagen

Example: (From *Ventures, Student Book 2* p. 116)

Attention, tenants:

Do you have a problem in your apartment? Is anyone fixing them?

- Many tenants have broken windows.
- Tenants on the third floor have no lights in the hall.
- A tenant on the second floor has a leaking ceiling.
- Tenants on the first floor smell garbage every day.

I'm really upset! We need to get together and write a letter of complaint to the manager of the building.

Come to a meeting Friday night at 7:00 p.m. in Apartment 4B

Stella Taylor, Tenant 4B

1. Which tenant has a leaking ceiling? _____
2. Which tenants have no lights in the hall? _____
3. Which tenants smell garbage? _____
4. What does Stella want to write? _____

5. Where is the meeting? _____

Useful Phrases

Your turn.

My turn.

I'm next. You're next.

I agree.

I don't agree.

How do you spell _____?

What does _____ mean?

I don't understand.

Please speak more slowly.

Please repeat.

Could you repeat that?

Thank you.

You're welcome.

It was nice talking to you.

See you later.

See you soon.

See you tomorrow.

Have a nice weekend.

Commitment Sheet

I will use the following three game-like activities in my classroom to reinforce a specific skill (L,S,R,W) during the next three months.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

References

Websites

- 50 Stimulating Classroom Starters: www.quia.com/pages/donna/workshops
- Icebreakers: <http://www.icebreakers.ws/>
- Variety of games: <http://www.group-games.com/games-by-type>
- Games, puzzles, worksheets, templates: <http://www.suelebeau.com/freetools.htm>
- Different games every day: <http://www.agameaday.com/>
- Worksheets, puzzles: <http://www.theteacherscorner.net/printable-worksheets/>
- Icebreakers, what to do on the first day:
<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teac htip.htm>
- Word search, crossword puzzles: <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/>

Other Resources

A Course in Language Teaching. Penny Ur, Cambridge University Press

Cathy's Cards, Kathy Diaz, Alta ESL

Conversation Inspirations, Nancy Zelman, Alta ESL

Cooperative Learning, Spencer Kagen, Kagen Publishing

Five-Minute Activities, Penny Ur and Andrew Right, Cambridge University Press

Learner Persistence, from *NCSALL Student Circle Guide*, John Comings

Ventures, Books 1, 2, 3, 4, and Teacher's Toolkit CD-ROM in the Teacher's Edition
K. Lynn Savage, Gretchen Bitterlin, Dennis Johnson, Donna Price, Sylvia Ramirez

Zero Prep, Laurel Pollard and Natalie Hess, Alta ESL

Donna Price, San Diego Community College Cont. Ed

MATERIALS MANAGERS

Duties:

- Pass out papers for the teacher.
- Distribute and collect books.
- Be sure the cabinet is neat before you leave.
- Be sure all materials (dictionaries, tapes, etc.,) are put away before you leave.

LANGUAGE YOU NEED TO DO THESE JOBS:

Here you go. Here you are.

Did everyone get a handout?

Does anyone need a sheet?

Who needs one?

There is one book missing.

Who forgot to put back the ...?

Should everyone get a book, or should students share?

TRAINERS

Duties:

- Help new students. Ask them to sit with you. Introduce yourself.
- Show the new students where to sign in. Show them where the materials are.
- Help the students feel comfortable.

LANGUAGE YOU NEED TO DO THESE JOBS:

Hi. Welcome to the class. My name is _____
What's your name?

Every day you sign this sheet when you come in. When you leave, you sign out. (Show the student the sign-in attendance sheet).

The books and materials are over there in the cabinet. (Show the student).

If you have any questions, please ask me. I can help you.