

Games for Vocabulary Practice

Interactive vocabulary
activities for all levels



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and Katie Head**

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Frontmatter
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Introduction

What roles can games play in vocabulary learning?

Researchers say that vocabulary must be encountered at least seven times before it is truly learnt. They also advise that words are most easily learnt when students manipulate them and make them their own in some memorable way. For both these reasons, games have a particularly important role to play in vocabulary learning: they provide an enjoyable way of revisiting words and they give students the opportunity to use them in a memorable context.

The activities suggested in this book are, thus, not intended to teach sets of completely new vocabulary: that would make the games far too difficult. Rather the activities are intended to help students consolidate their knowledge of English vocabulary.

How is the book organised?

There are 18 topic-based units in this book. Each unit has three games, one at each of three levels – elementary, intermediate and upper-intermediate to advanced. There is a map of the book, which gives a clear overview of the topics of the units, the vocabulary focus, activity types and student interaction patterns used in each of the 54 games in the book.

How is each game arranged?

Each activity consists of two pages: a page of notes for the teacher and a photocopiable page that may be freely duplicated for students. The teacher's notes on the left-hand pages provide you with information about:

Time

Aim

Materials

Key vocabulary

Warm-up

Main activity

Variation

Follow-up

Homework

The **Time** allocated for each activity is usually 40–45 minutes, though some activities are shorter. The suggested times include a warm-up activity and some follow-up work in the classroom. The teacher can, of course, make the games fit into a shorter lesson by omitting the warm-up or follow-up activities, or by doing them in different lessons.

The **Aim** for each activity clearly summarises the kind of language to be focused on.

The **Materials** section lists everything that will be required for the activity. It is assumed that students have pens and paper.

Key vocabulary lists the vocabulary that is required for the game. It is important that teachers should read through this section when deciding whether a game is appropriate for a particular group of learners.

The **Warm-up** section suggests ways of familiarising the students with the language which will be required in the activity. Depending on the level of the class, you may need to spend longer on this part of the lesson – though with stronger groups you may need to spend little or no time on this section.

The **Main activity** section explains the steps of the activity as clearly and concisely as possible. We would recommend in most cases that you demonstrate these steps to the students instead of just reading them out to them. In some cases you may feel it would be helpful to note down the key steps on the classroom board.

The **Variation** section suggests ways of adapting the basic game for different classroom situations or contexts. Occasionally there are suggestions for a completely different game, but still using the same photocopiable materials.

The **Follow-up** section suggests optional classroom activities to develop and practise further the language worked with in the games. These follow-up activities may be used in a later lesson, if that is more appropriate, or they may be omitted.

The **Homework** section provides a couple of different suggestions for homework tasks based on the work of the activity. These tasks are, of course, optional but we strongly recommend that you choose one of them for your students, in order to help them learn the key vocabulary more effectively.

What about the photocopiable materials?

The materials on the right-hand pages can be freely photocopied. Quite often you will also have to cut up the materials into separate cards, as indicated by the cutting lines. If you are lucky enough to have access to a laminator, we would recommend preparing laminated sets of materials so that they can be easily reused.

Learning from others

In some activities you will also see an acknowledgement. This is because many of the games we have used in this book have been learnt from or inspired by other people or by popular or traditional games that we know.

We hope that, just as we have adapted games we learnt from others, you will do the same with the activities we present here. We feel sure that many of the photocopiable materials we offer here can be used in different ways from those we have suggested. Similarly, many of the activities described can be used with a different vocabulary focus to meet the needs of different groups. We hope that you will find lots of interesting ways in which you can adapt and be creative with the activities in this book.

Above all, we very much hope that your students will enjoy playing these games and that they will also help them to consolidate their knowledge of English vocabulary.

Felicity O’Dell and Katie Head

Games for Vocabulary Practice

Map of the book

| Activity | Level | Vocabulary focus | Activity type | Student interaction | Time (minutes) | Page |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|------|
| UNIT 1 Personal information | | | | | | |
| 1.1 All in a day | Elementary | Everyday expressions formed with the verbs <i>do, get, go, have, make, take</i> | Board game | Groups of 3–4 | 40–45 | 10 |
| 1.2 How special am I? | Intermediate | Ways of talking about yourself and finding things in common with others | Questionnaire and discussion game | Individually, then in groups of 4–6 | 40–45 | 12 |
| 1.3 The dating game | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Expressing personal likes, dislikes and preferences | Question and answer game to find an ideal partner | Individually, then whole class | 40–45 | 14 |
| UNIT 2 The family | | | | | | |
| 2.1 Family tree | Elementary | Family relationships | Information gap | Pairs | 40–45 | 16 |
| 2.2 The happy couple | Intermediate | Stages in a relationship | Storytelling and role play | Pairs, then groups of 4 | 40–45 | 18 |
| 2.3 Family idioms | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Idioms relating to family life and relationships | Card game | Groups of 4 | 35–45 | 20 |
| UNIT 3 Daily activities | | | | | | |
| 3.1 What people do | Elementary | Verbs describing everyday actions | Describing and arranging pictures | Pairs | 35–45 | 22 |
| 3.2 Change places if ... | Intermediate | Everyday activities | Changing places in response to prompts | Whole class or large groups | 25–35 | 24 |
| 3.3 Check in cheerfully | Upper-Intermediate to advanced | Phrasal verbs and adverbs of manner | Mime and guess | Groups of 4–6 | 35–45 | 26 |

Map of the book

| Activity | Level | Vocabulary focus | Activity type | Student interaction | Time (minutes) | Page |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|------|
| UNIT 4 Homes | | | | | | |
| 4.1 At home | Elementary | Furniture and household items | Mime and guess | Groups of 5–6 | 30–35 | 28 |
| 4.2 Fully furnished | Intermediate | Furniture and household items | Board and dice game | Groups of 5 | 40–45 | 30 |
| 4.3 Dream rooms | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Language to describe rooms, décor and furniture | Questionnaire and find a partner | Individually, then in pairs | 40–45 | 32 |
| UNIT 5 In the town, in the city | | | | | | |
| 5.1 Finding places | Elementary | Places in the town and prepositional phrases | Information gap | Pairs | 30–35 | 34 |
| 5.2 Mystery word pairs | Intermediate | Compound nouns for places in the town | Card game and storytelling | Pairs | 35–45 | 36 |
| 5.3 City life | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Common problems in towns and cities | Discussion and debate | Groups of 4 | 35–40 | 38 |
| UNIT 6 Travel and tourism | | | | | | |
| 6.1 Name the country | Elementary | Country names and describing countries | Crosswords | Groups of 4 | 35–40 | 40 |
| 6.2 Happy holidays | Intermediate | Items for holiday luggage | Card game | Groups of 4 | 30–40 | 42 |
| 6.3 Colourful holiday collocations | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Collocations used in holiday brochures | Card game – matching pairs | Groups of 3–4 | 40–45 | 44 |
| UNIT 7 Food and drink | | | | | | |
| 7.1 What I had for dinner last night | Elementary | Items of food and drink | Card and memory game | Groups of 4–8 | 30–35 | 46 |
| 7.2 Twenty questions | Intermediate | Verbs, adjectives and nouns relating to food | Yes/no questions | Groups of 5–6 | 40–45 | 48 |
| 7.3 Odd one out | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Food and drink and language explaining differences | Finding the odd one out game | Pairs | 40–45 | 50 |
| UNIT 8 Describing people | | | | | | |
| 8.1 Who am I? | Elementary | Words describing hair, build and clothes | Yes/no picture game | Pairs | 30–40 | 52 |
| 8.2 Compound adjective dominoes | Intermediate | Compound adjectives used about people | Dominoes | Groups of 4 | 40–45 | 54 |
| 8.3 The people's alphabet game | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Verbs, nouns and adjectives used about people | Board game | Groups of 4–5 | 30–40 | 56 |

Map of the book

| Activity | Level | Vocabulary focus | Activity type | Student interaction | Time (minutes) | Page |
|--|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|------|
| UNIT 9 Describing things | | | | | | |
| 9.1 Everyday objects | Elementary | Names and uses of everyday objects | Bingo | Individually | 35–40 | 58 |
| 9.2 Kim’s game | Intermediate | Names and descriptions of objects | Memory game | Individually, then in pairs | 40–45 | 60 |
| 9.3 Name this thing | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Names and descriptions of objects | Board game | Groups of 3–4 | 35–45 | 62 |
| UNIT 10 Friends and relationships | | | | | | |
| 10.1 Poems | Elementary | Adjectives and phrases to describe people | Writing poems | Individually, then in pairs | 40–45 | 64 |
| 10.2 Interesting people | Intermediate | People’s lives and backgrounds | Card and dice game | Groups of 4–6 | 40–45 | 66 |
| 10.3 Feelings | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Adjectives describing feelings | Board game | Groups of 4–5 | 40–45 | 68 |
| UNIT 11 The human body | | | | | | |
| 11.1 Describing the body | Elementary | Parts of the body | Word squares and information gap | Two groups, then pairs | 35–40 | 70 |
| 11.2 Doctor, doctor | Intermediate | Illness, symptoms and treatment | Role play | Whole class | 45 + | 73 |
| 11.3 Idioms of the body | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Idioms based on parts of the body | Card game | Groups of 6–8 | 40–45 | 76 |
| UNIT 12 Leisure time | | | | | | |
| 12.1 Mystery evening out | Elementary | Talking about an evening out | Story completion | Individually, then in pairs | 30–35 | 78 |
| 12.2 Picture your free time | Intermediate | Leisure activities | Draw and guess | Groups of 3–4 | 30–35 | 80 |
| 12.3 Can you do any conjuring tricks? | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Leisure activities, interests and experiences | Survey and discussion | Individually, then in groups of 3–4 | 40–45 | 82 |
| UNIT 13 Education | | | | | | |
| 13.1 My first school | Elementary | People, places and objects in a school | Spot the difference | Pairs | 40–45 | 84 |
| 13.2 Secondary school: the best days of your life? | Intermediate | Experiences during school days | Board game and speaking | Groups of 3–4 | 40–45 | 86 |
| 13.3 Successful learning | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Learning styles and environment | Questionnaire and discussion | Groups of 3–4 | 40–45 | 88 |

Map of the book

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|---|--------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|------|
| UNIT 14 The world of work | | | | | | |
| 14.1 Who, where and what? | Elementary | Jobs and workplace | Card game | Pairs | 30–35 | 90 |
| 14.2 Guess my job | Intermediate | Jobs and describing them | Yes/no questions | Whole class | 35–40 | 92 |
| 14.3 Dangerous and stressful jobs | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Jobs and why they are dangerous or stressful | Categorising and ranking | Groups of 3–4 | 40–45 | 94 |
| UNIT 15 Money and shopping | | | | | | |
| 15.1 Bring and buy sale | Elementary | Prices, buying and selling | Role play | Whole class | 40–45 | 96 |
| 15.2 Crossword conversations | Intermediate | Money and shopping, and defining language | Crosswords and defining | Pairs | 40–45 | 98 |
| 15.3 Get rich quick quiz | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Idioms and language connected with money | Quiz | Groups of 2–3 | 35–45 | 100 |
| UNIT 16 Past experiences | | | | | | |
| 16.1 Past time dominoes | Elementary | Past time expressions | Four-sided dominoes | Groups of 3 | 35–40 | 102 |
| 16.2 Phrasal verbs auction | Intermediate | Phrasal verbs in sentences about the past | Auction of correct and incorrect sentences | Pairs | 40–45 | 104 |
| 16.3 What a great story! | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Language for describing and reviewing a film or book | Categorising words and writing a film summary | Groups of 3–4 | 40–45 | 106 |
| UNIT 17 Science and technology | | | | | | |
| 17.1 A day in the modern office | Elementary | The modern office and computers | Spot the difference | Pairs | 40–45 | 108 |
| 17.2 Sci-tech board game | Intermediate | Names of inventions, sciences, scientists, planets and man-made objects | Board game | Groups of 4–5 | 35–45 | 110 |
| 17.3 Definitions | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Modern concepts in computers, entertainment, work, transport and science | Define and guess | Whole class or groups of 6–10 | 30–40 | 112 |
| UNIT 18 Social and environmental issues | | | | | | |
| 18.1 Find five | Elementary | The natural world | Grid completion | Individually, then in pairs | 35–45 | 114 |
| 18.2 Social survey | Intermediate | Social issues | Survey and discussion | Individually, then in groups of 3–4 | 30–35 | 116 |
| 18.3 Compounds | Upper-intermediate to advanced | Compound nouns of social and environmental issues | Card game | Groups of 3–4 | 35–45 | 118 |