

## Learning and Motivating Through Games

### Why games are brain compatible:

- Semantic memory: the weakest of our memory systems
- Active learning—kinesthetic
- Modality
- Creates community/bonding/social learning/social skills
- Many require critical thinking
- Using games students are already familiar with provides connections for better understanding of content
- Novelty/attention/motivation
- Creative rehearsal
- Healthy competition

### Relearning through Recall

Every time we recall information from long-term storage into working memory, we relearn it. Teachers should use strategies that encourage students to recall previously learned information regularly so they will relearn it. The best way to do this is active participation. David Sousa, 2001.

Hook and linking games require players to match words to definitions or identify opposites or similar pairs. These are great for vocabulary development and review.

Pictionary  
Scrabble  
Concentration  
I Spy  
What's missing from this picture?  
Password  
Wheel of Fortune  
Balderdash

Games that require students to generate questions or provide answers can be used as a way to access background knowledge and to review concepts already studied. These activities will help teachers determine what students already know and what they have learned.

Jeopardy  
Ball toss  
Who Wants to be a Millionaire  
Trivial Pursuit  
Who am I?  
Bingo  
Go to the Head of the Class

## **GAMES TO PLAY**

### **People Search**

This is an interviewing technique that helps students find out what they already know about a topic before the topic has been taught. This activity can also be revisited after the unit to correct, review, and/or reinforce student learning.

- Develop 10 – 20 key questions about the topic to be studied.
- Rewrite the questions using the following format: Find someone who can name....Find someone who knows....who can explain...
- Create a sheet with these statements followed by a space for the answer and another space for the responder's name.
- Have the students interview their classmates to find someone who can respond to the questions. The responder should sign the interviewer's sheet in the space provided.
- The responder can sign the interviewer's sheet only once.
- Limit the search to 10 or 15 minutes; have the class share.

### **Content BINGO**

This is another type of interviewing technique based on the game of BINGO. This activity helps to activate prior knowledge and build background before a concept is taught; this activity can be used for review, as well.

- Develop 24 questions about the topic to be introduced and place them on a BINGO card format. Remember to leave the center square free.
- Students are to interview classmates to find correct answers to the questions.
- The responder tells what he/she believes to be the correct answer to the interviewer, and if the interviewer believes it to be the correct response, the responder initials the card. Only one set of responder's initials per card.
- The first student to have a BINGO wins the game.
- If the concept is difficult and I know the students will not know the answer, I allow them to use classroom resources.

Variation: For review, students can create their own blank Bingo cards by writing responses that correspond to the questions posed by teachers. Teach high level question writing by giving the answer and have student write the question in the blanks.

### **ABC Preview/Review**

- Give each student (or pair of students) an ABC chart (see example below).
- Students write terms or associations related to the desired topic that begin with each letter of the alphabet. They should fill in as many boxes as possible.

- Begin study of the topic. Revisit the chart during the unit to add to the chart.
- Use as a review at the end of the unit.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z		

### Draw It!

Students select a card with a word and draw pictures until their teammates guess what's on the card.

Steps:

Blank paper or 3X5 cards for each team

1. Teacher or students create cards with a word or number on one side, relating to the curriculum
2. If students create the cards, they trade with another team.
3. Cards are stacked, shuffled, and placed face-down in the center of the table.
4. Student one picks the top card and reads it silently. On the opposite side of the card or on paper the student draws a picture(s) to communicate the content.
5. Teammates guess the content. Student continues elaborating his drawing until a teammate guesses correctly.
6. The process is repeated until everyone has a change or all the cards are used.

This can be played whole class with the class divided in two teams. Each team has one guess. If they get it wrong, the guess goes to the other team. If the team is correct, they draw another card.

### Jot Thoughts

This game works well to access prior knowledge or to review concepts already learned. Teammates cover the table with ideas they generate using Think Pad Brainstorming.

1. Teacher names a topic and sets a time limit.
2. Going clockwise, one student at a time, students announce one idea to the group and then write it on a post-it. The next student does the same with another

detail, idea, or fact about that topic. Students are to write as many ideas they can in allotted time, one idea per slip of paper.

3. Students attempt to “cover the table” with their post-its
4. The group to have generated the most ideas in the allotted time wins.

Variation: Students determine categories for the ideas they have generated and classify them according to their own classification system. Groups share ideas and classifications of ideas.

### **Team Interview**

Students are interviewed, each in turn, by their teammates.

1. Teacher assigns a topic and sets time limit.
2. On each team, one student stands ready to be interviewed by teammates.
3. Teammates interview student asking critical questions about the topic for designated amount of time.
4. Students take turns being interviewed.

### **Trading Cards**

Students use trading cards to form discussion groups of two or four.

1. Students each write down their assigned number (1-4) on cards.
2. Students stand.
3. Teacher plays upbeat music.
4. Students walk around the room.
5. Teacher stops music; students stop and listen.
6. Teacher gives two clues: size of group and who (using the numbers) is in the group.
7. Teacher gives discussion topic.
8. Students interact, using...
  - a. Timed pair share
  - b. Rally robin
  - c. Round robin

### **Stand Up, Hand Up, Pair Up**

Students stand up, put their hands up, and quickly find a partner.

1. Teacher says stand up, hand up, pair up
2. Students stand up and keep one hand in the air until they find a partner who's not a teammate.
3. Teacher gives question or topic
4. Partners share.

## **Commercial Breaks**

This activity is great for review.

1. Each student team (or pair) is assigned or chooses a review topic
2. After 10 minutes of prep time and rehearsal, they act out a commercial for the material that they have been learning.
3. Give them 30 seconds to be funny, bizarre, cute, sappy or exciting—whatever it takes to “sell” the “product” of knowledge and get everyone else to remember it.

## **Add-ons**

1. Invite one person to come up to the front of the room and act out or pose as some idea or concept that they have learned from the lesson.
2. Have another student come up and join the impromptu living sculpture until they form one giant human representation of what they’ve been learning.

## **Snowball Fight**

This activity can be used as an introduction at the beginning of the year, as a review, or any time you want student to get up and pair up.

1. Divide the class in half.
2. As an introduction activity, have the class write 3 interesting things about themselves on a piece of paper.
3. They then wad up their paper and throw it across the room (the snowball fight part).
4. Each student picks up a paper ball and finds the person who wrote it.
5. The students interview each other based on the details written on the paper.
6. They then introduce each other to the class.

Variations: This activity can be used for anything. One half of the class can write vocabulary words, the other half writes the definitions. Students then match the word with the appropriate definition.