

Word games by Jessica Killaspy

Age: Teenagers / Adults
Level: Upper-intermediate (B2) - Advanced (C1)
Time: 30 minutes
Objective: to encourage students to work in teams; to activate students existing knowledge of English; to focus on vocabulary and pronunciation
Key skills: speaking
Materials: one copy of the worksheet for each group of students

Note: I normally use this game in first classes, to get students interested in the English language and to encourage them to get to know each other through teamwork.

Procedure

- Put students in teams of about four. Tell them that one person in the group needs to be scribe (new vocabulary!) but that they will need to work together to think of ideas. They are going to be given some challenges related to the English language and there are points to be won for each challenge.

Note: the answers are also available as a PowerPoint for teachers who have computers in their classrooms.

- exercise 1:** This needs to be explained clearly. Students have to figure out which countries, when spelt out in capitals, do not contain any letters with enclosed spaces, i.e. A, B, D, O, P, Q or R. It helps to write an example on the board such as *France* and point out the letters that contain enclosed spaces (here, R and A). Note: Abbreviations like *The UK* don't count.

Give students 4 or 5 minutes and encourage them – they may need to be told that there are only four possible answers apart from the example, *LIECHTENSTEIN*, and you could tell them which continents the countries can be found on, too.

When time is up, go round and count how many correct answers each team has. Then, share the ones that nobody got. No team has ever got all four in my classes! The team, or teams, with the most correct guesses gets one point.

Key:

FIJI, SEYCHELLES, YEMEN, CHILE

- exercise 2:** Go over the question with your class and give teams 2 to 3 minutes to think of the longest word they can. When time is up, ask each team in turn for their longest word and write it on the board. Then, count how many letters each word has – the team with the longest valid word gets a point. On the board, write the words from the key below and be prepared to give the definitions and pronunciation, as students usually want to know!

Key:

pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis – a type of lung disease (45 letters)

antidisestablishmentarianism – the political position of being against the idea of stopping the Church of England being the official church of England, Ireland and Wales (28 letters)

The longest more commonly used words are deinstitutionalization, counterrevolutionaries (both 22 letters) and uncharacteristically (20 letters).

- exercise 3:** Read the question with your class. You may need to help by pointing out that 'y' can be used. Give students 3 minutes to think of as many words without vowels as possible. At the end of the time, find out how many each team has, check that they are valid words and write all words on the board. The team with the most gets one point.

Key (some example answers):

why, try, spy, rhythm, myth, gypsy, sly, shy, sky, fry, cry, pry, fly, by, my, gym (The longest commonly used word with no vowels is rhythms.)

- exercise 4:** Go through question and clarify that teams have to find a word that contains all five vowels. Give them 3 minutes to do so – they only have to come up with one word this time. Once the 3 minutes are over, ask teams for their words and any team with a correct answer gets one point. Finally, show them the other words they could have found.

Key (some example answers):

uncopyrightable, education, abstemious, facetious (The last two words contain the vowels in order.)

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6. **exercise 5:** Explain that a palindrome is a word or phrase that is the same when read backwards. Tell this story:

It is said that the first words ever spoken on Earth were palindromes. The first man saw the first woman and wanted to introduce himself. He said 'Madam, I'm Adam.' The woman replied simply, 'Eve.'

Point out that these would be the same read backwards and challenge students to think of more words in English that are palindromes (names are OK). They have 3 or 4 minutes to do this and the team with the most wins one point. Again, write all of the students' answers on the board and show them the answers from the slide, too. Note: a minim is a musical note.

Key (some example answers):

Anna, civic, kayak, level, racecar, minim, noon, radar, redder, refer, eye, stats, I did, did I?

7. **exercise 6:** Focus students' attention on the first tongue twister, say it once, then challenge students to practise saying it to each other in their teams. Repeat with the other two tongue twisters. This can be just for fun or, once students have practised, challenge them to say a tongue twister as quickly as they can in front of the whole class. Any student who says a tongue twister correctly and very quickly wins one point for their team.
8. **The end:** Add up the points and tell the winning team that their prize is the satisfaction of knowing that they won!

Extension:

This lesson can be extended by asking students to research more words for each challenge (a great homework task) or by asking them to assess the usefulness of the words they have learnt in the lesson. They could use a corpus (such as www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/) to find out in what contexts and how often the words without vowels are used, for example, or to prove that *antidisestablishmentarianism* is a very rare word. This might lead on to discussions about learning vocabulary and how it is important to know not only the definition of a word but, also, how often and when it is used in everyday English. If you have a lot of time, you could use this discussion to lead into an activity on collocations, using the words from this game.

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1. Can you think of any countries that, when written in capitals, don't contain any letters with enclosed spaces?

So they cannot contain A, B, D, O, P, Q or R.

E.g. LIECHTENSTEIN

2. What's the longest English word you can think of?

3. Can you think of a word in English that doesn't contain any vowels?

(a, e, i, o, u)

4. Think of a word that contains all the vowels.

5. Think of as many palindromes as you can.

6. Practise saying the tongue twisters below.

- The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain.
- She sells sea shells on the seashore.
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. Where is the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?