

# Snakes & Ladders

A publication of English Teachers in Japan (ETJ)

ISSN 1883 0080 Issue 1 Summer 2008

## Games for Large Groups

by Shannon Koga

Do you use games in your classroom? Most of us probably do; but to what extent? Games in the classroom have many purposes, be it a form of play, an element of fun, a means of integration or initiation into a classroom, or competition. More importantly, in the EFL world, games are being used to encourage language acquisition, capture students' attention and encourage concrete communication. Much of our game time within the curriculum is spent in class time with numbers varying between 4 and 8. However, on special occasions, from spring holidays to Hallowe'en, many of our schools take on group classes and encourage large group participation in games. Below are contributions from six teachers involving just that:

### 1. From Paul Canosa

"Knights" found at <http://www.boardgamegeek.com/game/1263> is a card game which requires students to know basic grammar and reinforces the pre-taught verbs want, need and have. Each player becomes a king or queen and tries to get the largest number of cards. Players acquire cards by rolling a set of 6 dice up to three times in order to get as many of the same number as possible. Teacher participation in this game facilitates play better and enhances the fun when students can challenge the teacher. Each player will turn over a card to start their turn. The card will list a series of numbers which that player must roll equal to or greater on the dice in order to acquire the card. Thus the use of the verb "want". "I want this card." or "I want the green castle card". Or the teacher can prompt by asking "what do you want ?The next step is for the teacher or other player to ask "What do you need ?" Whereupon the phasing player must answer the numbers required on the card. For example "I need three 4's" The player must then roll equal to or greater than three separate 4's on six dice. The player may roll



up to three times, keeping their choice of numbers. The player rolls the dice until they have either rolled three times or exceeded the total needed to win the card. The teacher then asks, "What do you have ?" Play continues around the table with players turning over cards, rolling dice, acquiring cards. You can set the victory goals to whatever you want or make it an open ended game if you don't want to impose a zero sum result on children.

### 2. From William Percy:

One activity you might consider for large or small groups is janken bingo. I've used this game to practice "Do you like ~?", but other patterns might be possible with a bit of thought. Give each student a sheet of paper with a blank grid of 4x4 squares. Get everyone to number the squares randomly, 1~16. The idea of the game is to collect a series of crosses in a straight line in any direction from one side of the grid to the other. Bingo! After everyone has numbered their grids introduce the question prompts on a blackboard. Up until this point these should remain hidden. The grid on the board must be big so that everyone can readily see what's what. It will have the same number of squares but they will be numbered in order for clarity. Each numbered square also contains a picture (assuming your youngest/weakest students cannot read yet). You should be able to fill a grid with 16 pictures of food, drinks, sports, animals, seasons, famous people and cartoon characters. Anything which is immediately recognizable and likely to elicit clear expressions of like or dislike. Invite someone

to demonstrate the game with you. Two players janken. The winner may ask the other a question prompted by one of the squares/pictures on the board. There might, for example be a picture of a box of natto in square number. If the other player replies 'Yes, I do' when asked if s/he likes natto, then the questioner can cross out the number 10 on the grid on their own piece of paper. (The student who replies doesn't mark their paper in any way.) Only janken winners who receive positive responses to their questions can cross off numbered squares and work towards Bingo. If the student doesn't like natto and says so then neither player marks their sheet and both search for a new partner to janken with (or play again themselves if no one is available.) When you are free and searching for a partner it helps to hold your hand up in the air as a signal to others who are also free. The game finishes when one player has a Bingo line in one or two directions.

### 3. From Cheri Hayashi

After 17 years of teaching using many board games, I've come to the realization that all one really needs to enjoy a good game is cards (I'm referring to the black and white photocopiable cards in the back of most teacher's books). I'm going to introduce a few of my students' favorite games using only cards.

1) Pictionary – I show the student a card, she begins to draw after I give the signal, and the first student to guess what it is raises his arm and, depending on the age, can say the word or in a sentence (statement or question or whatever you are practicing in class).

2) Musical Cards – Students stand in a circle holding one card in each hand. I turn on some music and they pass (not throw!) the cards to the person standing next to them in a clockwise direction. When I pause the music, the students say the word and sit down quickly (again, depending on the age, it can be a full sentence 'A monkey can swing' or whatever). You can have the last 1 or 2 people who sit down act like a monkey or different animal. It's not necessary, but my students loved it.

3) Changing Places – Hand out 2 of each vocabulary or phonics card to students. I usually give each student 3 cards. Students stand in a circle and I either put on a phonics chant or just any kind of music. When the sound or word is said, the two students holding the cards repeat in a big voice and change places. A very simple activity, but all my students like it. With the older students I make it more difficult by saying a sentence, which they have to repeat in time to the music.

4) What Am I? or What do I have? – I tape a card to the backs of the students and they have to guess what it is. Depending on what the target language is, the

students can be asking different questions. I did it with animals and the students had to ask certain questions in order (and not just say 'zebra?') a) 'Can it (run)?', b) 'Is it (big)?', c) 'Is it (brown)?', & d) 'Is it a (dog)?'. I've also had them do it back-to-back. They really enjoy guessing games.

5) Card Hunt – When studying prepositions and reviewing classroom objects I had hid cards picturing classroom objects around the room (before the students arrived!). I paired them off, handed them each a list of ten items (cards) to find. An example is 'There is an eraser under the table.', and so on. They were so excited running around looking for the items. One important rule was that they had to find the items IN ORDER on their list. I changed the order for each pair so it would eliminate students following other students.

Remember, if your students are having fun then you can bet that learning is taking place. Let's have fun with our students!



### 4. From Alan Miesch:

I don't remember where I picked this up, but I call it "Run and Tell." It is adaptable to almost any age or level—and to almost any language target, from phonics on up. Even my low-motivation students like it. It calls for reading, writing, speaking, and listening—as well as exercising one's short term memory—from every player. Prep time is minimal, and it can be used to introduce new language targets or to reinforce previously taught ones. What more could you want from an activity? Here's how it goes.

Compose a short passage that incorporates the target language. Mark the approximate half-way point in the passage. I post the passage outside the classroom. Students work in pairs. One—the runner—races out of the room to the posted passage, memorizes a manageable chunk of it, runs back to

their partner—the scribe—and orally passes on what they remember. The scribe writes it down, and the runner goes back for more. When a pair has reached the halfway mark, the runner and the scribe switch roles.

4) When a pair brings their completed passage to you for checking, you can be as picky as you think appropriate for your students. Run and Tell does not require the players to think about meaning or structure. While they are exposed to vocabulary and grammar, they need not notice it at all. I expect this could be remedied by including a question challenge based on the passage for after the transcribing task has been completed, but I have never tried this myself.



### 5. From Kim Horne

This is a great listening activity as well as a vocabulary review. Target vocab can be changed in accordance with the topic in study, but above all this is great for reinforcing “how many” questions.

Target age: Elementary to Adults

Materials: 1 set of numbers (0 -13, one number per sheet) on B5 or A4 paper for each team, a sheet of about 30-40 questions that require numbers for answers. Make sure you have questions for every number that you use, so no student (S) is left out.

Activity length: 45 minutes

Divide the class into at least two teams. For twenty Ss or less, two teams work well. For more than twenty, try three or four teams. It makes clean-up easier if each set of numbers (0-13) is on a different colored paper. Pass out a set of numbers (not in numerical order) to each team. Each S should get at least one number, some Ss may get more. All of the answers are numbers and team members with the correct answer should hold it up. To cut down on random guessing, allow only one answer per team per question.

Sample questions:

How many seasons in a year? (4)

How many legs does an octopus have? (8)

How many players on a basketball team? (5)

How many players in a singles tennis match? (2)

How many months from October to June? (9)

Later on in the game, read questions with answers that require Ss to put their numbers together, for example: What is  $11 + 6$ ? (17). I allow any combination that makes 17 i.e.: a 13 and a 4 or folding an 11 and putting it next to a 7. Creativity counts! Save a big number (i.e. How many days in a year? 365) for last. It's fun to watch the Ss scramble to put it all together.

### 6. From Vinko Bosnyak

Prepare a list of 16 letters to call out with a good mix of vowels and divide the class into three teams. Draw a large box divided into 16 squares on the board for each team. Each team has to make words horizontally from left to right, diagonally from top left to bottom right, and vertically from top to bottom. The game starts when you call out a letter; a student from each team then comes to the board and has about 20 seconds to write that letter in any square of their team's box they wish, members can help by calling out where to place the letter. Ss should write in capital form. After every third letter give the Ss an 'anything is O.K.' chance to write any letter they like. This gives a team that is doing badly a chance to recover.

E.g. B, G, O Anything S, N, O Anything I, A, P Anything T, E, P Anything

Score 4 points for a four letter word, 3 points for three & 2 points for a two-letter word. Demonstrate the game by showing a quick 'trial', however stress to the students at this stage that smaller words that occur within a larger word do not count as points. Only the larger lettered word is counted as points, also abbreviations are not allowed.

Horizontally = BOOK, ARE, GNAT (11 points)

Diagonally = BRA, AN (5 points)

Vertically = BAGS, OR, KIT. (9 points)

TOTAL: 25 points

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed games to this article. Hopefully these ideas will inspire more fun and games in your classes.