



# *The Super English Book of Games and Activities*

## *Compiled by John Phelps*

### **Warm-Up Games**

These games are used to get the students' brains energized and the English neurons firing.

#### Boggle

Create a 4X4 grid on the board. Fill it with a mix of vowels and consonants, keeping in mind some of the vocabulary that the students should know. Split the class into teams, each with a designated part of the board to write on. Tell the students that they have 2 minutes to write as many words as they can, with one student writing one word on the board and then passing the chalk to a team mate.

*Twist:* Give the students a category the words must fit into, such as “occupations,” “places,” or “animals.”

*Twist:* To reduce the chaos, assign one kid for each team to stand at the back of the classroom. The team shouts the words that they spot at him. Assign a second kid to be the runner, who goes from the teller to the writer. The third kid, the writer, is the only one allowed to write for his team.

#### Wack a Mole

Warning! This game can derail your class if you aren't able to quickly bring the students under control. It is really fun, though!

Use a large empty water bottle or a rolled up notebook or piece of paper for a bat. You give this to the student who is “it.” “It”'s goal is to hit the desks of the students whose names you call before they can answer a question you call out. “It” should start from the farthest point in the classroom from the “mole” students.

Example: Teacher: “ ‘Which animal has a trunk?’, Boss and Ice” “GO!”  
[“It” runs to try to hit Boss and Ice’s desks with the bat]  
Boss: “An ele [Bam! It hits his desk] Oh no!”[five points for It’s team]  
Ice: “An elephant has a trunk!” [5 points for her team]

#### Mini Boxes

Draw 5 rows of 5 dots on the board, with about two inches between each dot. Each team must make 2 lines for each turn. When 4 dots have been connected to make a box, that team puts their team initial in it. To make a faster game, connect a few of the dots before the game begins. When a team completes a box, they get a free turn. The team with the most boxes wins.

#### Hangman Tic-Tac-Toe

One of the favourites among both P and M classes. Draw a tic-tac-toe board on the board. In each square, put hangman blanks for vocabulary words or answers to language target questions. When a team earns a turn, they pick which box they want to mark with their X or O. You give them a question or hint. For example “Where does the engineer work?” The square has 12 blanks, for “train station.” If they know the answer, they must spell it. If they don't know the answer, they guess letters. Write the incorrect letters inside the box, but not on the blanks. For each correct guess, they can guess again. When they complete an answer and mark an X or O, they get an opportunity for another turn before the other team.

### Telephone

Have two students from the back of a column come up to you. Whisper a secret sentence to them, or show them a written sentence. They go back to their seats and whisper it to the student in front of them, until the sentence has passed to the head of the column. That student must either stand and shout the sentence or run and write it on the board (up to you). First team to have the sentence completed wins (can judge based on how close to the original, if desired).

*Twist:* Have the students sit in a column on the floor, if possible. More fun for the younger kids.

### First Letter, Last Letter

This game sounds lame, but it's good. Write a word on the board, then underline the last letter. Write another word on the board that starts with the last letter of the last word. Underline the first letter. Tell the kids, "the first letter is the last letter!" Give the kids a time limit and see how many words they can connect in this letter chain. Can have teams compete or just the whole class working together. Great for introducing new vocabulary. Can use categories or play it completely open to any words.

Example: banana - apple - eggplant (fruits and vegetables category)

### Patty-Cake Style Chant (Clap, Clap, Lap, Lap)

Make up a chant with whatever language target you are using. Make a beat with clapping your hands and slapping your legs (lap). Start the beat with the students, then speak the target to the beat. Students have to reply without dropping the beat. If the beat drops, it is point for the other team. Students engage in A-B dialogue until a point is scored.

Example: Teacher: [Clap, clap, lap, lap] What are you doing, Rose?

Rose: [Clap, clap, lap, lap] I am singing!

[Clap, clap, lap, lap] What are you doing, Ice? (and so it goes...)

### Sentence Unscramble

Scrambled is always better than fried. Scramble a sentence from a language target the kids know, or one you are about to pre-teach. You can have teams compete, or do it relay style. (one kids runs to the board, writes one/two words, then passes the chalk)

Example: Always better fried than scrambled is. → Scrambled is always better than fried.

*Twist:* Pair this with tic-tac-toe or connect-4, having 2 teams compete. When they write one word correctly, in order, they may put one X or O on the game board. It is very fast paced, and you have to correct them as they go.

### Finish My Sentence

Great for quickly reviewing several targets. Tell the students the first two words of a sentence (a language target they have worked on recently is best). They have to finish the sentence either verbally or by writing it on the board. Example: Pick two students to stand up. Tell them: "These are..... GO!" Both students yell or write the answer as quickly as possible: "These are John's books!" Give points to the first team with a correct answer.

*Twist:* Have a student say one or two words to the two contestants.

### Team Spelling

Pick a word for the class to spell (also can be done with competing teams). Put a blank for every letter on the board, and pick one student for each letter in the word. Line the students up and tell them they can only write one letter of the word, on their blank. You can say the word, or make it more complex by asking a question. For instance: "Library!" or "Where do you get a book?" Once you cue them, the first student writes the first letter, then passes the chalk to the next in line. Be sure to catch any errors, and don't let the team progress to the next blank unless they have the right letter.

Example: (the word is summer) Teacher: "What is the hot season in America?"

6 students write: s u m m e r

Student #6: "Summer is the hot season in America!"

*Twist:* Act out a word or have a student act out a word.

### Team Sentence Writing Drill

Similar to the team spelling game, but there may not be a certain number of words in the answer. So, pose the question to two teams, then have them pass the chalk to their team mates to write the answer on the board, one word at a time. The student can't pass the chalk until they write an appropriate word in the correct order.

### What am I ?

Have a student stand in front of the chalkboard and write a word over their head. Vocabulary words that are nouns are best. The student can ask his team yes or no questions until he guesses the word or reaches a 5 or 10 question cut-off. Then the student must say a sentence with the word.

Example: Word above kid's head: Zookeeper

The kid can ask: Do I work in a school? Students answer: No, you don't.

Can I fly a plane?

No, you can't.

Do I work with animals?

Yes, you do!

Am I a vet?

No, you aren't.

Am I a zookeeper?

Yes, you are!

### Four Corners (Adapted)

This is good to drain some excess energy from the kids. Assign responses to four corners of the classroom. Have two to four students stand in the middle of the room. You ask the students a question, or have the winner from the last round ask a question, and the contestants speed-walk to the correct corner and say the response.

For example, "Where do we have science class?"

Corner 1= the gym . Corner 2= the lab. Corner 3= the classroom. Corner 4= the library.

Answer: "We have science in the lab."

*Twist:* Have the students act out what they say as well.

### The Island Game (Fast)

Draw a circle with chalk on the floor, or pick about 4 tiles on the floor to constitute an "island."

Quickly ask students questions, or have them complete A-B dialogues as they each step onto the island.

If any students fall off the island, they are eaten by sharks and told to sit down. After reaching the end of the line of students, give points for the number of kids still huddled in a tight bunch on the island.

No part of their body can be outside of the area inscribed by the tiles or chalk.

*Twist:* Have a "storm" once all the students are on the island, by gently tugging or pushing on the group. See how many students fall off.

### Quick Limbo

Take a length of string or a broom (in every Thai classroom) and have two students hold it. After each student completes a dialogue, he goes under the "Limbo" stick/string. He must pass under feet first, head last, and can put his hands on the floor the lower the stick goes. Award an increasingly higher level of points the lower the stick gets.

### Speed Connect-4

Draw a 5X5 grid on the board. Ask students quick questions or have a scrambled sentence written on the board, that each team gets to run up and write the next word in order. When they get a correct

answer, they put an X or O on the board (but must start from the bottom, like the board game). First to 4-in-a-row wins.

### Odd Man Out

This is like the Sesame Street game “Which doesn't belong?”. You write three words on the board, or you can write several sets of three words on the board at once. The students guess which word isn't the same category in teams and (if advanced enough) they explain why it doesn't fit. This is good for phonics practice, too. Sometimes, students may come up with different answers. They should get a point as long as they can correctly explain why 2 words go together and the other doesn't. For example:

roar	boar	roll	- “roll,” it doesn't end with a “r” sound (easy)
run	gym	jump	- “gym,” it is a noun, the other 2 are verbs
bat	ball	racket	-2 answers: “bat,” could be an animal or “racket” because you don't use it in baseball

### A...B...C...

Basically an easier version of first letter, last letter for less advanced kids. If the kids are advanced enough, explain what a “category” is. Sports, school supplies, and foods are good examples. Have one kid pick a category and say one word from that category that starts with “A”. The next team says a word with “B”, and so on, until they can't think of one within a 5 second countdown. Sounds lame, but they like it. Good warm-up, if you target it to a few categories you have been using in your lessons.

*Twist:* Have the category change every 5 or 7 turns, make sure kids only get 5 seconds to come up with an answer. Can speed up the countdown for more excitement.

## **Target Specific Games**

### Body Builder

This can actually be used for any target, but it is especially handy for body parts. Use dice and assign each number a body part, or for more detail, assign each card in a deck of cards a body part (but use only one suit (2- Ace). After a student answers a question, he rolls the dice or draws a card from the teacher's hand. Then he can draw that body part onto his team's body on the chalkboard. If the part that the cards or dice come up with as already been drawn, the student doesn't get to draw any body parts on the board. The first team to complete their body/monster/robot wins.

### Listen and Draw

This is great for practicing prepositions. Two ways to do it:

1. Every student draws- Have every student open their notebook, and tell them to draw everything you say. For instance: “A robot is between a watermelon and a durian.” Ridiculous sentences keep them interested. Use as many prepositions as you can, and when you check their books, check it against your memory or a script you have written down.
2. Team competition- Split the board into sections for each team to draw. Kids come up one at a time to illustrate each sentence that you say. Tell the students the game will go for 3 minutes (but give them five). Every 15 seconds or so, say a sentence. The student draws it on the board quickly, then runs to give the chalk to another teammate at their desk. The students should always be running a bit behind the teacher's narrations, scrambling to catch up. At the end of the time limit, the drawing closest to the teacher's narration wins.

Use vocabulary words, prepositions, and sentence structures that you have been practicing in class. It is a good opportunity to check understanding.

### Where is the Robot

This game is good for two different targets: giving directions and prepositions. Have one student stand outside of the class. Hide a toy robot or object in the room. To practice directions: Have 5-6 students in line to give him directions to the robot when he comes in. No other students can tell him anything, and those giving directions can only say one task at a time. For example, student 1: "Go straight." student 2: "Turn left"... etc.

To practice prepositions: When the student comes back in, he can ask only yes or no questions of the class to help him find the robot. Example : Student-"Is it under Poom's desk?" Class- "No!" The student can only ask up to 10 questions, or the robot explodes and the class is reduced to rubble.

## **Short, Adaptable to Any Target Games**

These are easy to conduct games that don't require getting too wrapped up in the details.

### Steal the Bacon

Be careful! This game needs a classroom that you can easily bring back to order, otherwise, it will lead to craziness of a mutinous level. You need prop- stuffed animals are the best, but you can also use a ball or a chalkboard eraser- this is the "bacon." I call 2 students up from different teams. You can either tell the students they must make it all the way back to their desks with the bacon, or you can draw a button for each team at opposite ends of the chalkboard. When you say "Go" they can both reach for the bacon and attempt to get back to their desk/button. If they do it without getting tagged by the other student, they get to answer the question for 5 points. If the other student tags them, the tagger gets to answer the question for 3 points.

### Sumo

The single most requested game of 2012 by students.

Easiest way: draw two vertical lines about 2 feet apart on the chalkboard. Pick two sumo wrestlers or have the class choose two. It is often hilarious to see who they pair up. The students stand with their backs to each other, their shoulders lined up with the vertical lines on the board. (Big chalk lines let the whole class see who is winning the bout) It is a good idea to have them do a ceremonial sumo dance before starting. Address a question to both of the students, the first one to clap gets to answer. For each correct answer, the student can take a small step backward. Eventually, the students will be back-to-back. When that happens, give the "3-2-1- SUMO!" countdown, at which point they can start pushing against each other (back to back) until one student steps past the chalk line. (They are not allowed to grab or lean on anything.) Be sure the game doesn't get too wild, as kids could fall and get hurt.

*Twist:* Incorporate this into Boom, Switch, Steal for a super game. Assign a number for sumo on the dice or throw in a sumo slip.

### Ostrich Game

Materials: Binder clips and slips of paper with questions or sentences written on them.

Pick three students, or more if you have a lot of space. Have a stack of slips of paper with either questions or sentences they have been learning written on them. The students stand with their backs to you as you clamp a paper on each of their backs. When the game starts, the students must hop like ostriches to see what is written on the other students backs, without revealing their own. If a student successfully reads another student's back (or answers the question on it), then he gets that student out. Go until there's one ostrich left.

### Chicken Dance Relay

Materials: None. Just a funky chicken.

Pick 8-10 students from each team and have them stand in lines. Put an A-B dialogue on the board, and have the students complete the dialogue with new answers until they get to the last student in line. (For younger classes it's good to make the finished students sit down in place when they finish). After each kid completes the B of the dialogue, they do a chicken dance, then ask the student behind them the A part of the dialogue. (Then sit down.) The losing team has to do a group chicken dance (Arrested Development the TV show is a good source for inspiration here.)

### If You Love Me, Please Smile

A good game for hormone charged adolescent classrooms, if you can get them to do it. P4-P6 also like it. Pick one kid (your most dramatic is best) to be "it." Their task is to get another student to either smile or laugh and thus make that student "it." First, they have to practice a conversation. Then, "it" tries to flirt or manipulate the other student into smiling (They have to say the line "If you love me, please smile.") The other student must reply, if they are able, with "I love you, but I can't smile." "It" gets two tries with each student. No Thai allowed! For example, the target conversation is about likes/dislikes and sports.

It: What sports don't you like?

Student: I don't like baseball or tennis.

It: Oh! You are so handsome! If you love me, please smile.

Student: I love you, but I can't smile. [doesn't smile or laugh]

It: Please, please! If you love me, please smile. [does a silly dance and coquettish expression]

Student: I love you, but hahahahahaha! [laughs]

Teacher: Haha, You're it!

## **Review Games**

These are games that can be drawn out to take the bulk of a class period, for days when you are not introducing new material. These make it easy to fire through a large number of review language targets and get a large number of students to participate.

### Best of the Best (Mike's Invention)

March Madness style tournament of individual students. Use your student roster or a list of student #s to pair kids up in a head to head quiz question (you can have them clap to simulate a Jeopardy buzzer, or slap their hand on their desk). A good idea is to start with student #1 vs. student #55 (last student). Mark down each match and circle the winner in your notebook. This tournament usually will take more than one class period, so it is good if you just do a little a day to keep the suspense building of who will be the "Best Student in the Class."

### Chutes and Ladders

Derived from the board game. Divide the class into two or three teams. Make a 5X5 or 5X6 grid on the board, and draw ladders and snakes/chutes. I always put a chute in the square right before the "Finish" square to add drama. For a team's turn, I have either one student answer a question, or make a line of 3-5 students do an A-B dialogue within a 1-2 minute time window. If they get the answer correct or the relay of students meets the time, they get a turn. You can draw a dartboard on the chalkboard and have them throw chalk for 1/2/3 spaces or use dice. Award points for each correct answer, and have reaching the "Finish" worth a whopping bonus of points. You can play until a team reaches the finish, or cut the game off and declare the leader the winner.

*Twist:* Put "Battle spots" on the board (I use a skull and crossbones). If a team lands here, they choose a team to battle, and two volunteers compete in a question-off. The winning team can swap spots with the losing team, if they want to.

### Battleship (Simple Skipper-Less Version)

Make a 5X5 or 4X5 grid on the board. Number each space on the grid, or put letter and # headings (like the Milton & Bradley game). Divide the class into 3-4 teams, and have each team whisper their "secret number" into your ear, or write it on a slip of paper and give it to you. A ship only takes one space on the board.\*\*\*Make sure you write the numbers down clearly, where you can check them as the game progresses. The kids will attack you if you mess this up.\*\*\*Turn based, after a correct response or A-B relay, students can throw chalk at the grid to blow up a space. (Or you can have students simply walk up and X out a spot, if the class is too unruly to be trusted) Go crazy when a team blows up another ship. When a team's boat explodes, they can still play and fire at the boats, but they have to "swim" (see twist). The team with the most boats wins at the end. Ties are decided by points given for answers along the way.

*Twist:* Teams can blow up their own ships, in which case they still get a few points for the shot.

However, for the remainder of the game, they have to "swim" by standing farther away than everyone else when they go to throw the chalk for their turn.

*Twist 2:* Pick a spot for the teacher submarine to go. Teams get extra points for sinking the teacher and/or Thai teacher's boat (only do this if the Thai teacher is cool with it).

*Twist 3:* Put a "Battle Bullseye" on the board (I use a skull and crossbones). If a team shoots here, they choose a team to battle, and two volunteers compete in a question-off. This is good to keep kids interested if they aren't hitting any ships.

### Battleship (with Skipper) (in the tradition of the Funtastic Brittany D)

Make a grid, as above. Turn-based, as above. Make only two teams. Each team has a skipper, who makes a copy of the grid on a piece of top-secret paper. IN PEN, the skipper places his team's boats on the grid (each boat is only one space on the grid). Games will take longer if teams are given more boats to place on grid. The teacher crosses off squares on the board to keep track of what spots are called out by the attacking teams. As the teacher crosses off the spot on the board, he asks the fired-upon team's skipper "Hit or miss?" (2 colors of chalk are useful, since the grid on the board represents both team's grids) If it is a hit, it is the teacher's duty to go crazy. The team with the most boats wins at the end. Ties are decided by points given for answers along the way.

### Tetris (Joe's invention)

This game is as easy as a classless society. Make a grid, 5X5 for 3 teams, larger for more teams. Turn-based, students only get a turn with correct answer or A-B dialogue. Each team is assigned a shape, which they get to place on the board when their turn comes up. Each team has a bomb, which they can use only once to blow up another team's piece on the board and replace with their own.

*Twist:* Do a head to head competition for some rounds, with a representative from each team buzzing in to answer a question first, or competing in writing an answer or sentence on the board.

Draw this on the board:

	Team #	Team \$	Team *

As turns occur, the students place their marks and use bombs. They must

start at the bottom of the grid, then move up as each space below is filled. A bomb drops all the marks above it down one box. 4-in-a-row explode and drop everything above down one box. (You don't have to play with the dropping action if you don't want to, it makes it more complex and more fun.) You will end up with chalk all over you.

				\$
*	*	\$		#
*	\$	#		#

### Sentence- Building Xs and Os (Brittany D style, explanation copied from her.)

This game is a relative of Xs-and-Os, on a bigger board.

It can be adapted to all sorts of grammar applications and (most)students love it.

Draw a 5 x 5 grid (other sizes can be used if necessary).

Choose categories for the rows and columns.

The object is to choose a row and column combination, and make a sentence using the words correctly. A simple example: giraffe (row) stripes (col): "A giraffe does not have stripes."

I have used many row/column combinations, for example pronouns and prepositions; animals and their characteristics; activities and days of the week. The possibilities are endless and this makes the game infinitely adaptable to your lesson plan.

Divide the class into teams; toss a coin to decide which goes first.

A correct sentence earns a mark in the grid square (X or O); incorrect leaves it unclaimed. The other team then gets a try.

The object is to get 3 Xs (or Os) in a row. The game is not over at the first 3-row. 4 in a row counts as 2 threes. Continue until the grid is full. Keep track of 3-rows. Team with the most, wins!

Rules for speaking sentences can be structured to the level of the class. I find the best is to require team members to take turns with minimal help from teammates. This results in peer pressure that brings the inattentive into play.

*Twist:* You can use a basic sentence and embed the grid requirements within it, for example:

The girl is [rows: sitting standing eating playing dancing] [cols: in front of, beside, behind, next to, between] the boys.

### Super Boxes

Same as Mini-Boxes in the "Warm-Up Games" section, but with more dots. Up to you to connect a few dotes before the game or leave them all unconnected. Can jump start the game by having a team make 2 lines for each turn, then slow it down by having them draw only 1 (just make sure to do it in rounds, so every team has the same opportunity) Team with most boxes completed wins.

*Twist:* Reverse the goal of the game. Instead of wanting to gain boxes, teams try to avoid completing a box. Team with the most boxes completed loses.

### Criss-Cross ( will make you wanna jump, jump)

This game is great for a class with kids who don't readily participate. Make an entire column of students stand up. Pose a question to the column, and the first student to clap gets to answer. They get a 10 second count-down to answer. If they are correct, they can sit down. Once you are down to the last student in the column, you switch to that student's row. (Hence criss-cross.) The entire row stands up, and the process is repeated. The humor comes when the same students keeps coming up last and having their row/column stand up. Depending on your student's level, it helps to put the 1-4 different questions on the chalkboard, so they know what to expect.

*Twist:* Instead of clapping, have the students do a crazy dance move from Saturday Night Fever or shout out a crazy vocabulary word that is hard to pronounce. Sometimes I do whole tongue-twisters, like "I like to lick lollipops!"

*Twist:* Have a student pose the questions to the row or column. You could have every kid who goes out third or something-th have to be the questioner for the next row or column.

### Criss-Cross 2.0

Same concept as above version. However, put only one target/question on the board. Example: "What are you doing?" Have a whole column stand up, say "Go!" The students answer in order from the beginning of the column, the first student who repeats an answer or can't answer in 5 seconds stops the game. That student's row (hence criss-cross) then stands up. Example: 1- "I am running." 2- "I am walking." 3- "I am running." Teacher- Stop! Everyone in Student 3's row, please stand up. [The column sits down.]

### Boom, Switch, Steal!

This is the most successful game across the P1 to M4 age groups. Make at least 3 teams to make it interesting. It is a turn-based game in which turns are awarded for a completed A-B dialogue or correct answer. Students get points, but there are three tricks. Boom- the team loses all their points. Switch- the team must switch points with another team, even if they have more points than all the other teams. Steal- the team must steal all of one team's points. Two versions:

-Take a Slip: Put point values 1-5 on slips of paper, then 1 Boom, 1 Switch, 1 Steal slip. (Can play with the # of slips and special slips if you like, for more or less drama.) Students pull the slips out of a bowl or hat. You have more control here, because you can remove slips to speed it up.

-Dice: 1=Boom, 3=Switch, 6=Steal, 2/4/5 are point values. You get a lot of drama with this version, usually every team hits rock bottom at least once.

### Nurses, Bombs, and Guns

This game is about Cambodia. Haha. Just kidding. This is a chalkboard game to be played with 3 or more teams. You have 5X5 or so grid prepared in your own notebook with spots filled in with the following: Nurses (give a team another life), Bombs (Blow up all a teams points/and/or take a life), Guns (allow a team to take one life from another team). Each team has three lives, and they try to get as many points before their lives are out. The grid on the board is blank, showing only which spots have already been picked on the grid. Students take turns answering your review questions and getting points for them, then pick a spot on the grid (like battleship, can call out coordinates or throw the chalk). Whatever the square reveals determines their fate. The team with the most lives and/or points at the end of the game wins.

*Twist:* To break up the pattern of giving each team a turn, address a question to the whole class and have the student that stands up and claps first give the answer. That kid's team gets bonus turn. If the game needs to speed up, you can have teams pick two squares on one turn.

## Monkeys and Bananas

Materials: Game is better if you have dice (1), but can substitute a drawing of a dartboard on the chalkboard, with 6 as the bulls-eye and 1 as the outer rim. Have students stand at a challenging distance to throw chalk at it.

Best for 3 or 4 teams. Each team starts with 3 bananas and no monkey mouths. The point of the game is to get the most bananas. If a team gets one banana, you draw it under their team's name on the board. If they get a monkey, it eats one of their bananas. One monkey eats one banana. Three monkeys eat three bananas.

When a team gives a correct answer, they get to say whether their turn will be for their own team or one of the other teams. Then, they roll the dice or throw the chalk at the dartboard.

1 = one banana, 2= 2 bananas, 3=one monkey (oh, no!), 4= two monkeys (double oh no!), 5= three monkeys (some little kids burst into tears when this happens to their team), 6= six bananas!

If they had chosen to roll for their own team and they get a 6, then their own team gets the 6 bananas.

If they chose to roll for a different team, that team gets the six bananas. Same things goes for the monkeys. So, a team doesn't know until they roll whether they will give or take bananas from the other team until they roll (that's why they have to say who they're rolling/throwing for first).

If a team gets 2 monkeys, for example, but only has one banana left, then you erase their sole banana and draw one hungry monkey mouth. This serves to make the children feel terrible about their prospects in life, until the next turn when they get a banana to feed the evil monkey. Then the monkey mouth goes away, and their view of life brightens substantially.