

# ESL ESSENTIAL GAMES

Over 170 Fun and Engaging ESL Classroom Games for Students of All Ages

## BOARD RACE

### Team A

1. Play
2. Learn
3. Draw
4. Smile
5. Touch

### Team B

1. Think
2. Speak
3. Spell

### Team C

1. Run
2. Listen
3. Write
4. Read



**ESL**  
ESSENTIALS  
SERIES

# ESL ESSENTIAL GAMES

**THIRD EDITION**

**By Teach-This.com**



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Third edition January 2023.

TeachThis Limited

2301 Bayfield Building  
99 Hennessy Road  
Wanchai, Hong Kong

<https://www.teach-this.com>

# Notes for Teachers

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## The ESL Essential Games eBook

ESL Essential Games contains over 170 fun games for English teachers to use in the classroom. Many of the games can be easily adapted to cater to multiple levels. There are games for young learners, teenagers and adults. Most of the games require minimal preparation time, so they can easily be used as last-minute replacement activities or fillers. The games are also categorized to make selection easier.

These games can be used in any English course to supplement other materials. The games are flexible enough to be easily incorporated into most lessons and can be used to introduce and practice vocabulary or grammar, revise language structures, or improve core skills such as listening, pronunciation and speaking.

You can use these games as warmers at the start of a lesson, during the lesson to liven up the class and reinvigorate students, or at the end of class to finish on a positive note and round off the lesson.

The games in this eBook provide engaging and interesting ways to help students make connections between words and grammar. Making these connections helps quicken the process of language learning. These games also help to build confidence, focus attention, improve participation, and energize students. The games have been created by qualified and experienced ESL professionals and have been tested and proven in the classroom.

## How to Use this eBook

Games can be easily selected by scanning through the table of contents. To help with the selection process, all games have been categorised according to a particular theme and have been arranged in alphabetical order. The table of contents shows the aim, the language skills focus and the language level for each game. Shortcut hyperlinks have also been included to provide quick and easy navigation.

Each game comes with detailed teacher's notes that provide key information such as activity types, language focus and aim, preparation requirements, and estimated time duration. The notes also include a comprehensive step-by-step procedure, making the games quick and easy to incorporate into a lesson plan. Each resource comes in a user-friendly and printable A4 PDF format.

## Levelling

The contents show the following abbreviated levels in brackets:

- Young learners (YL)
- Elementary (A1-A2)
- Pre-intermediate (A2)
- Intermediate (B1)
- Upper-intermediate (B2)
- Any level (Any)

## Contents

Name	Aim	Skills	Level
<b>Answer Games</b>			
1. Hot Potato	To motivate students to answer questions.	Speaking	YL
2. Noughts and Crosses	To provide a fun way to go through answers to questions in class.	Speaking	A1-A2
3. Speak Button Game	To provide a fun way to go through answers to questions in class.	Speaking	Any
4. The Buzzer Game	To motivate students to answer questions.	Speaking	Any
<b>Brainstorming Games</b>			
5. Alphabet Brainstorm	To review vocabulary and lexical sets.	Vocabulary	Any
6. Brainstormers	To review vocabulary for various topics and categories.	Vocabulary	Any
7. Brainstorming Race	To review categories of words and their spellings.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
8. Five Things That...	To review categories of words.	Vocabulary	A2
9. Outburst	To review vocabulary for various topics and categories.	Vocabulary	A2
10. The Invention Game	To brainstorm possible uses for everyday objects using <i>can</i> and <i>could</i> .	Speaking	B1
<b>Category Games</b>			
11. Balloon Volleyball	To review categories of words.	Vocabulary	A1-A2
12. Board Races	To review categories of words and their spellings.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
13. Category Battleships	To find words and put them into appropriate categories.	Vocabulary	A1-A2
14. In the Circle	To review vocabulary for various topics and categories.	Vocabulary	Any
15. List of Categories	To provide teachers a list of categories that can be used for games in this eBook.	Teacher resource	Any
16. Monkey in the Middle	To say words from various categories.	Vocabulary	YL
17. One by One	To guess words from particular categories.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
18. Race to the Bottom	To say category words beginning with a particular letter.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any

## Contents

Name	Aim	Skill	Level
<b>Category Games continued</b>			
19. Scattegories	To write category words beginning with a particular letter.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
20. Seek and Destroy	To identify words according to their particular categories.	Vocabulary	Any
21. Stickmen	To list words that belong to a certain category.	Vocabulary	Any
22. Stop	To think of the least uncommon words belonging to a certain category and beginning with a particular letter.	Vocabulary	B1
23. Stop the Music Game	To review words belonging to particular categories.	Vocabulary	Any
<b>Classic Childhood Games</b>			
24. Cops and Robbers	To practice names of objects and the structures: <i>What have you got? I have got...</i>	Vocabulary and Speaking	A1-A2
25. I Spy	To name visible objects beginning with a certain letter.	Vocabulary	YL
26. Mr Crocodile	To review vocabulary for clothes, appearance and colours.	Vocabulary	A1-A2
27. Mr Wolf	To practice telling the time and basic numbers.	Vocabulary	YL
28. Red Light, Green Light	To review numbers, the alphabet and categories of words.	Vocabulary	YL
29. Simon Says	To practice imperatives.	Listening	A1-A2
<b>Counting Games</b>			
30. Fizz Buzz	To practice numbers 1 to 100.	Vocabulary and Listening	A1-A2
31. Frog Bob	To practice basic numbers.	Vocabulary	YL
32. Number Categories	To practice numbers and lexical sets	Vocabulary	Any
33. Tingleish	To review numbers.	Vocabulary	YL
34. 7 Up	To practice numbers 1 to 7	Vocabulary	YL
<b>Describing Games</b>			
35. Describe it	To describe words and to guess words from another student's descriptions.	Vocabulary and Speaking	A2
36. Describing Dodgeball	To practice describing personal appearance.	Vocabulary and Speaking	A2-B1

## Contents

Name	Aim	Skills	Level
<b>Describing Games continued</b>			
37. Details	To write descriptions of visible objects using adjective-noun collocations.	Vocabulary and Writing	A2-B1
38. Felix the Cat	To think of appearance and personality adjectives beginning with a certain letter and form basic sentences.	Vocabulary and Speaking	A2
39. Hot Seats	To describe words and guess words from descriptions	Vocabulary and Speaking	Any
40. Swat	To listen to a description and match it with a word.	Vocabulary and Listening	Any
41. Teammates	To write descriptions of people and to guess the person being described.	Vocabulary and Writing	Any
42. Ten Words	To describe and guess recently studied words.	Vocabulary and Speaking	Any
<b>Drawing Games</b>			
43. Beetle Drive	To review parts of the body vocabulary.	Vocabulary	YL
44. Don't say a word!	To review and practice recently taught vocabulary and grammar.	Grammar and Vocabulary	Any
45. Draw the Sentence	To review and practice the present continuous tense.	Grammar	A2
46. Pictionary	To review general vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any
47. Quick Draw	To review recently taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any
48. The Drawing Game	To guess the names of famous films, TV shows, books or people.	Vocabulary	A2
49. The Picture Game	To practice prepositions of place and adjectives for people and objects	Vocabulary, Speaking and Listening	A2-B1
<b>Drilling Activity Games</b>			
50. Coin Races	To practice and repeat question and answer structures.	Grammar and Speaking	Any
51. Lord of the Rings	To practice and repeat question and answer structures.	Grammar and Speaking	Any
52. Three Times	To practice asking for and giving personal information.	Grammar and Speaking	YL

## Contents

Name	Aim	Skills	Level
<b>First Day of Class Games</b>			
53. My Life in Five Sentences	To use sequence words to arrange information about a partner logically.	Writing and Speaking	A2
54. Secrets	To practice asking and answering <i>Wh</i> questions.	Speaking	A2-B1
55. Snowball Fight	To introduce other students to the class.	Speaking	A2
56. Teacher's Question Time	To write and respond to questions about the teacher and course.	Speaking	A2-B1
57. The Name Game	To give basic personal information about oneself and report the personal information of others.	Speaking	YL
58. Trip to the Moon	To practice introducing oneself.	Speaking	YL
59. Two Truths and a Lie	To introduce oneself by sharing personal information.	Writing and Speaking	A2-B1
60. Who am I?	To ask personal information questions	Speaking	Any
<b>Flashcard Games</b>			
61. Flashcards at Dawn	To review recently taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary	YL
62. Grab it	To review or practice target language.	Vocabulary	Any
63. Mr Wolf	To practice asking and answering simple yes/no questions.	Speaking	A1-A2
64. Sumo	To review recently taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary	YL
65. The Flashcard Exchange	To review or practice target language.	Vocabulary	YL
66. Tiddlywinks	To answer questions related to particular words.	Vocabulary	A1-A2
67. Whisper	To review words, sentence structures or tenses.	Listening and Speaking	Any
<b>Grammar Games</b>			
68. Correction	To identify and correct grammar errors.	Grammar	Any
69. Grammar Auction	To identify and correct grammar errors.	Speaking	Any
70. Grammar Races	To review grammar points and recently taught vocabulary.	Grammar, Vocabulary and Writing	Any



## Contents

Name	Aim	Skills	Level
<b>Grammar Games continued</b>			
71. Just a Minute!	To practice peer correction of impromptu speech.	Grammar and Speaking	B2
72. Verb Races	To practice verb conjugations.	Grammar	A1-A2
<b>Hangman Games</b>			
73. Consonant Hangman	To introduce new vocabulary or revise previously taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
74. Dice of Fortune	To review previously taught vocabulary or sentence structures.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
75. Last Man Standing	To review film titles, idioms, slogans, and the names of famous people and places.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
76. Letter by Letter Hangman	To review previously taught vocabulary or sentence structures.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
77. Parts of Speech Hangman	To practice parts of speech, sentence structure and grammar.	Grammar and Vocabulary	B1
78. Scrambled Hangman	To review previously taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
79. Sentence Hangman	To review or practice parts of speech, sentence structure and grammar.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
<b>Listening Games</b>			
80. English Whispers	To review previously taught vocabulary or language points.	Listening and Speaking	Any
81. It's not Musical Chairs	To practice listening for specific details.	Listening	A2-B1
82. Odd One Out	To practice listening for specific details.	Listening	YL
83. Sticky Fingers	To practice listening for keywords or to review recently taught vocabulary.	Listening and Vocabulary	YL
<b>Miming Games</b>			
84. Back to the Board	To review recently taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any
85. Charades	To review and practice previously taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any
86. Classic Charades	To review and practice previously taught vocabulary or a film, song or book titles.	Vocabulary	A2-B1
87. Emphasize	To practice stress, intonation and gesture to express emotion and attitude.	Pronunciation and Speaking	B1-B2

## Contents

Name	Aim	Skills	Level
<b>Miming Games Continued</b>			
88. Verb Antics	To review or practice verbs and verb forms.	Vocabulary and Grammar	Any
89. What am I doing?	To review or practice the present continuous tense.	Grammar and Speaking	A2
<b>Music Games</b>			
90. Let's Dance	To review and practice parts of the body, action verbs and imperatives.	Listening, Vocabulary and Grammar	Any
91. Musical Flashcards	To review and practice previously taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary	YL
92. Musical Madness	To review and practice vocabulary for parts of the body.	Vocabulary	A2
93. Word Grab	To listen for detail and review practice previously taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary and Listening	Any
94. Word Snake	To review and practice vocabulary belonging to particular categories.	Vocabulary and Spelling	A1-A2
<b>Question and Answer Games</b>			
95. Balloon Stamp	To practice asking and answering questions.	Speaking	Any
96. Button Up	To practice a variety of question and answer structures.	Speaking	Any
97. Dartboard Game	To practice answering questions.	Speaking	Any
98. Duel	To practice answering questions.	Speaking	A1-A2
99. Fanning the Kipper	To practice answering questions.	Speaking	A1-A2
100. Flinch	To practice answering questions.	Speaking	A1-A2
101. Killer	To practice asking and answering questions using different grammatical structures.	Speaking and Grammar	Any
102. Pac-Man	To practice answering questions.	Speaking	A1-A2
103. The Waiting Game	To practice asking and answering questions.	Speaking	Any
104. Three-Step Tag	To ask and answer target questions set by the teacher.	Speaking	Any
105. True or False?	To practice asking and answering questions.	Speaking	A2-B1
106. Verbal Football	To answer target questions set by the teacher.	Speaking	Any

## Contents

Name	Aim	Activity Type	Level
<b>Quiz Games</b>			
107. ESL Quiz Game	To review previously taught grammar and vocabulary.	Grammar, Vocabulary and Speaking	Any
108. Guns, Bombs and Angels	To answer general knowledge questions or to review question and answer forms.	Speaking	Any
109. Join the Dots	To answer quiz questions.	Speaking	Any
110. What's the Question?	To review and practice <i>Wh</i> question forms.	Grammar and Speaking	A2-B1
<b>Sentence Race Games</b>			
111. Alphabet Madness	To review and practice parts of speech, grammar and sentence structure.	Grammar and Speaking	A2-B1
112. Balloon Buster	To practice word order and sentence structure.	Grammar	Any
113. Sentence Race	To write sentences in a certain tense using a specific time expression.	Grammar, Vocabulary and Writing	A2-B1
114. Splat	To review practice vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure.	Grammar, Vocabulary and Speaking	Any
115. Translation Race	To translate sentences from the students' native language into English.	Speaking, Grammar and Vocabulary	Any
116. Words to Sentences	To review or practice vocabulary, parts of speech and sentence structure.	Writing, Grammar and Vocabulary	A2-B1
<b>Spelling Games</b>			
117. Backdraw	To review and practice the spelling of recently studied vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any
118. Blind Speed Spell	To review the spelling of previously taught vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any
119. Chopsticks	To review the spelling of previously taught vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any
120. Flower Power	To review and practice the spelling of recently studied vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	A1-A2
121. Remix	To review the spelling of previously taught vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any

## Contents

Name	Aim	Skills	Level
<b>Spelling Games</b>			
122. Spell or Draw	To review the spelling of previously taught vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any
123. Spelling Grid	To review and practice the spelling of recently studied vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any
124. Spelling Knockout	To review the spelling of previously taught vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any
125. Spelling Race	To identify and spell words from pictures.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any
126. The Spelling Game	To review the spelling of previously taught vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any
127. Up the Ladder	To spell category words beginning with certain letters.	Spelling and Vocabulary	A2-B1
128. Word Chain	To think of a word that begins with the last letter of the previous word.	Spelling and Vocabulary	YL
129. World Cup Spelling	To practice the spelling of general vocabulary.	Spelling and Vocabulary	Any
<b>TV Game Shows</b>			
130. Blankety Blank	To review and practice previously taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary and Grammar	A2-B1
131. Blockbusters	To review previously taught or general vocabulary.	Vocabulary	B1-B2
132. Countdown	To review and practice general vocabulary.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
133. Family Fortunes	To guess the top five answers in a survey.	Vocabulary	B1
134. Mastermind	To review previously taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
135. Strike it Lucky	To review recently studied vocabulary, grammar or language points.	Grammar and Vocabulary	Any
136. The Price is Right	To practice saying the prices for goods.	Vocabulary	Any
137. The Weakest Link	To answer revision or general knowledge questions.	Speaking	Any
138. Who wants to be a millionaire?	To answer revision or general knowledge questions.	Listening and Speaking	Any

## Contents

Name	Aim	Skills	Level
<b>Verb Games</b>			
139. Catch	To practice verb forms.	Vocabulary	Any
140. Classroom Tennis	To practice irregular verb forms.	Vocabulary	A2-B1
141. The Verb Tree	To review and practice verbs and sentence structure.	Grammar and Vocabulary	Any
142. Things we do...	To review regular and irregular verbs.	Vocabulary	A2-B1
143. Verb Connection	To make sentences or questions with specific verbs and verb forms.	Grammar and Vocabulary	A2-B1
144. Visual Verbs	To review irregular verbs and their various forms.	Vocabulary	Any
<b>Vocabulary Games</b>			
145. Bluff	To review and practice previously taught words and their definitions.	Vocabulary and Speaking	B1-B2
146. Collocation Ladder	To review and practice previously taught collocations.	Vocabulary	A2-B1
147. Over the Line	To review recently taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary	YL
148. People to People	To review parts of the body vocabulary.	Vocabulary	A2
149. Ships of War	To review vocabulary for particular categories.	Vocabulary	Any
150. Vocabulary Deck	To review and practice vocabulary for particular categories.	Vocabulary	Any
<b>Word Association Games</b>			
151. Mallet's Mallet	To review and practice vocabulary for particular categories.	Vocabulary	Any
152. Password	To review previously taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any
153. What's the Topic?	To review and practice various topic based vocabulary	Vocabulary	A2-B1
154. Word Association Game	To review and practice general vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any
155. Word Disassociation Game	To review and practice general vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any

## Contents

Name	Aim	Skills	Level
<b>Word Games</b>			
156. A Ship Comes Loaded	To review and practice general vocabulary.	Vocabulary and Speaking	Any
157. Balderdash	To invent false definitions for words and guess true definitions.	Vocabulary and Writing	B2
158. Lewis Carroll's Game	To practice or review general vocabulary and spellings.	Vocabulary and Spelling	A2-B1
159. Match the Squares	To review recently taught vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any
160. Minimum	To review general vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any
161. The Longest Word	To review general vocabulary, meanings, and spellings.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
162. Tic Tac Words	To review general vocabulary.	Vocabulary	Any
163. Two Words	To review and practice general vocabulary and sentence structure.	Vocabulary and Speaking	Any
164. Word Race	To review practice words belonging to various categories.	Vocabulary	A2-B1
165. Word Square	To review general vocabulary and spellings.	Vocabulary and Spelling	Any
<b>Yes/No Question</b>			
166. Changing Chairs	To write and respond to yes/no questions.	Grammar	Any
167. Glug	To practice yes/no questions and short answers in various tenses.	Grammar and Speaking	A2-B1
168. The Ring	To practice yes/no questions, short answers, and adjectives of appearance.	Vocabulary and Speaking	A2
169. Throw a Question	To review and practice answering basic yes/no questions.	Speaking	YL
170. Twenty Questions	To practice asking and answering yes/no questions	Grammar and Speaking	A2-B1
171. Virus	To ask and answer yes/no questions.	Grammar and Speaking	Any
172. Yes No Laugh	To ask and answer yes/no questions.	Speaking	A2-B1

### Activity Type

Speaking Game:  
answering questions

### Focus

Giving answers

### Aim

To give answers to  
questions.

### Preparation

None

### Level

Young learners

### Time

10 minutes

### Introduction

Here is a quick and easy ESL game to motivate your students to answer questions. This game can be played in any situation where the students have to answer questions in class, e.g. answering exercise questions.

### Procedure

Take a small object such as an eraser.

Hand the object to a student and then turn around facing away from the students.

Tell the students to pass the object around.

After a few seconds have passed, shout 'Stop!'

The student holding the object at that time must then answer a question set by you.

If the student answers the question successfully, they score a point.

If not, the game continues.

When a question has been answered correctly, repeat the process.

Continue until all the questions have been answered correctly.

The student with the most points at the end of the game wins.