

TOP 5 ESL Writing Games

Original content from Jackie Bolen, from [My Life! Teaching in a Korean University](#)

1. Boggle

Skills: Writing

Materials: "Boggle" grid on PowerPoint, whiteboard or paper

You've probably played the word game Boggle before. You have to shake up the letters and then you have a certain amount of time to make some words with connecting letters. You can also play it with your students but you don't need the actual Boggle game. Simply make up a grid on the whiteboard, PowerPoint or on a piece of paper. I make a 6x6 one and put some obvious words in like colors or animals. Then, students go in pairs and have to make as many words as possible that are 4+ letters. You can give a bonus for longer words if you like. At the end, students count up how many points they have, you can double-check for any errors and then award a small prize to the winning team.

Procedure:

1. Prepare a "Boggle" grid.
2. Students go in pairs and try to make as many words as possible with 4+ letters. You cannot use the same letter in a single square twice within a single word.
3. Students add up points. The teacher checks answers of the top 2 or 3 teams and declares a winner.

***If you teach small groups of less than 6 students, it might be worth investing in the real Boggle game. You can get the ["Super Big Boggle" game on Amazon](#) for less than \$20.

o	r	p	t	s	a
e	a	i	e	t	f
b	k	n	e	r	i
a	d	r	g	o	r
c	o	t	l	s	e
k	f	h	m	a	n

Some possible words from this board:

green, pink, rake, back, fire, fires, fast, road, rose

Like this activity? It's from this book: [39 ESL Warm-Ups: For Teenagers and Adults](#)

2. Alphabet Race

Skills: Writing

Time: 5 Minutes

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Nothing

This is a simple game you can play for a warm-up when your students already know a lot of the vocabulary about the topic. Put the students in pairs and they have to write the alphabet vertically on a piece of paper, one letter per line. Then you can give them a topic. For example: "Words to describe a city." B-Busy, E-Exciting. My rule is that they only need one word per letter.

Give the students 3 or 4 minutes, collect the papers, check for the inappropriate answers, add up the points and you have a winner!

If you have a small class, you could only award a point if nobody else in the class has that word in

order to encourage creativity.

3. Comic Strip Challenge

Skills: Writing/reading

Materials: Comic Strip printouts

This is a fun warm-up that is great for those students who are a little bit introverted because it doesn't involve speaking but instead focuses on writing. Print out a simple blank comic strip and have the students fill it in individually or in pairs. It's best if you can find one that matches the topic for that day, such as emotions, hobbies, dating, etc. Then you can have students compare with a partner or another pair and finally you can elicit some volunteers to share their ideas with the class.

Procedure:

1. Print out a blank comic strip paper (one per student or one per pair).
2. Have students fill in the comic strip.
3. Students compare with a partner or another pair.
4. Elicit some volunteers to share their comic strips with the class.

4. Running Dictation

Skills: Writing/listening/speaking/reading

Time: 15 minutes

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: The "dictation" + some way to attach it to the walls or board.

This is one of my favorite 4-skills activities which covers reading, writing, listening and speaking. These are kind of the "holy-grail" of ESL teaching and if you find a good one, make use of it!

Make up a story or conversation a few sentences long (less than ten). Put each single sentence on a strip of paper. Put these around the classroom in various locations. The students will be in teams of two. One person is the reader and one is the writer. The reader gets up and reads a bit of the

passage and comes and tells it to the writer. They go back to remember more of it and so on and so on. At the end, the students have to put the passage or conversation in order. When they're done, I'll check their writing and if there aren't many mistakes, that team is the winner. How many mistakes you allow depends on the level of your students. Tell your students before the activity starts that yelling is not allowed, or they will be disqualified.

Here are 2 examples of running dictations I've used in the past.

[Around the house](#)- Intermediate Level

[Introduce Yourself](#)- Beginner Level

Procedure:

1. Prepare a simple story or conversation and put each sentence on a single strip of paper.
2. Put the papers around the classroom on the wall.
3. Divide the students into teams of two-one writer and one reader.
4. The reader stands up and reads the paper, then goes back to the writer and tells what they read to the writer, who must write it.
5. The reader continues going until all sentences are complete.
6. The two students put the story or conversation in the correct order.

5. Unscramble the Sentence or Conversation

Skills: Reading, writing

Time: 10 minutes

Level: Beginner-Intermediate

Materials Required: Whiteboard or Powerpoint

Put up a “Mixed-Up” conversation or a few unrelated sentences on the board. The students then to have turn them into coherent English. It’s an excellent way to review grammar concepts.

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