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teacher should circulate the classroom during the game to engage students in conversation and keep them on task. The first students to finish win a prize, but only if they share their conversation with the class and read the words correctly. If not, the next group shares, and so forth. Materials Needed: Unit's word list for each student (you also use index of book) How to Expand the Game: After the game, you might ask multiple student groups who were having strong, vocabulary-rich discussions to share their conversation with the class. If students have been sitting for a long time prior to the start of the game, you can encourage the partner groups to walk around the room together while they talk. Look Out For: Make sure that students are not using words to discuss inappropriate matters or insult each other. Make sure students are using words correctly. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Partner ELLs with native speakers. Use a shorter list of words. Give students specific topics to discuss. Divide students into two teams. Write two lists of unit words on the board (one for each member of each team). Each team forms a line leading to the board. When given the signal, the first child on each team goes up to the board, points at the first word in the team's column, and reads aloud that word. If the student reads the word correctly, he or she erases that word. The student then moves to the back of his or her team's line. The first team to erase all the words on their list wins. Materials Needed: How to Expand the Game: Instead of pronunciation, students could say the definition of the word, give an example of the word, correct a misspelled word, etc., in order to erase it. Look Out For: Make sure students in line don't call out the answers. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Review the pronunciation of words before the game begins. Divide the class into two teams. Each member of the team is asked a vocabulary question (definition, spelling, pronunciation, etc.). If the student gets the answer right, he wins a point for his team, and he has the chance of getting another question if he's able to make a basketball shot. If the student makes the shot, he's asked another question. If he gets that right, he has another chance at the basketball shot, but this time he must take a step or two back. This continues until the student misses a shot or gets a question wrong. In either case, the next question goes to the other team. After everyone has had a turn, the team with the most points wins. Materials Needed: Foam basketball and hoop (or paper wad and recycling bin) List of words for teacher How to Expand the Game: Each time the student earns another basketball shot, the difficulty of questions can increase. For instance, the first question could be spelling, the second question could be a definition, etc. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: You can vary the level of difficulty for each question depending on each student's level. For instance, give spelling and pronunciation questions to students who are struggling with vocabulary, and definition and example questions to students who have already mastered spelling and pronunciation. Divide class into two groups and have them form an inner and outer circle, with students facing each other. For the first 15 seconds, each student in the inner circle asks a prepared vocabulary question (about spelling, pronunciation, definition, example, etc.) to the student she is facing. If the outer-circle student answers correctly, the inner-circle student signs his word list. For the next 15 seconds, the outer-circle student asks the inner-circle student a question, and signs her sheet if she answers correctly. Then students rotate to the right and repeat the process with the new students they face. Whoever has the most signatures at the end of the game time wins. Materials Needed: List of words for each student Pen for each student How to Expand the Game: Play until everyone has reached his or her original partner. Look Out For: Make sure to demonstrate different types of vocabulary questions. If you have an odd number of students, make one student the "supervisor" who walks around the circle to keep other students on task. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Give students one minute or more to prepare questions. They can use the same questions multiple times. Expand question-and-answer time to 30 seconds or a minute. Divide students into two teams and give each student a number. Number 1 from each team comes to the front of the room. The teacher reads a clue related to a word (the clue could be a definition or example of the word) and the first person to slap the board or desk gets to answer. If correct, his team earns a point. If incorrect, the person from the other team has a chance to earn a point. Repeat with the following sets of students. The team with the most points wins. Materials Needed: How to Expand the Game: With further preparation, you can arrange the clues on the board according to category with varying points and difficulties, just like on TV. Look Out For: depending on your comfort level, you can prepare the clues in advance or make up clues on the spot. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Post possible words on the chalkboard. Have students compete from their seats rather than come to the front of the class. Have students compete in teams. Divide students into two teams. One student from one team comes to the front of the class, chooses a word from the basket, and acts out the word without speaking. Whichever team yells out the correct word first earns a point. The next student to act out a word comes from the other team, and so on. Whichever team has the most points when time is called wins. Materials Needed: Each word on a separate small piece of paper A basket How to Expand the Game: This game can be played for a longer period of time to review for an exam. You can also include bonus words from other units for deeper review. Look Out For: Make sure to have a set time period so that students feel it is fair for one team to win. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Post possible words on the chalkboard. Use a smaller group of words. Play the game in small groups, with one student acting out the word for two or three classmates. Divide students into two teams. One student from one team comes toWhichever team yells out the correct word first earns a point. The next student to describe a word comes from the other team, and so on. Whichever team has the most points when time is called wins. You may wish to limit each team to two or three guesses per turn. Materials Needed: Each word on a separate small piece of paper A basket How to Expand the Game: For each word, write a list of commonly associated words that the students cannot use in their descriptions. Look Out For: Make sure to have a set time period so that students feel it is fair for one team to win. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Give students the full list ahead of time and allow them to write out their clues for each word so they don't have to come up with clues on the spot. Divide students into two teams. One student from one team comes to the front of the class, chooses a word from the basket, and draws a picture representation of the word without writing any letters. Whichever team yells out the correct word first earns a point. The next student to draw a word comes from the other team, and so on. Whichever team has the most points when time is called wins. You may wish to limit each team to two or three guesses per turn. Materials Needed: Each word on a separate small piece of paper A basket Chalk or marker How to Expand the Game: This game can be played for a longer period of time to review for an exam. You can also include bonus words from other units for deeper review. Look Out For: Make sure to have a set time period so that students feel it is fair for one team to win. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Post possible words on the chalkboard. Use a smaller group of words. Play the game in small groups, with one student drawing the word for two or three classmates. The teacher announces a category and students select the words that go into that category. Possible categories include: Nouns Verbs Adjectives Emotional words Temporal words Put the words in alphabetical order Words with three syllables Words with prefixes or suffixes Materials Needed: A set of all words on small separate sheets of paper for each student How to Expand the Game: Have students explain why they put certain words in each category. Look Out For: Circulate the classroom to make sure all students are engaged. This game works best with a large group of words. If students have a word that you didn't expect in a category, ask them to explain their reasoning. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Students can sort words into their own categories and then have other students guess what the category is. Students can work in groups. Hand at least one page of the newspaper or magazine to each student. Each student finds a picture or article that relates to a word from the week and cuts it out. After most students have found words, ask them to explain to the class why their picture or article relates to their word of choice. Materials Needed: Any newspaper or magazine (can use one or a few) Scissors How to Expand the Game: Have students write on a separate sheet of paper why this picture or article relates to their chosen word. Possibly post some on the word wall. Ask students to find as many articles or pictures as possible that relate to multiple words. Look Out For: Try to choose sections of the newspaper with more pictures, including ads. Make sure to leave time for students to clean up their newspaper and magazine scraps. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Students can work in groups to find related pictures and articles. Students can bring in newspapers or magazines in their native language. Divide students into two teams and create a baseball diamond in your classroom (or go outside if possible). The teacher is the pitcher. Each member of team 1 takes a word and stands in the infield and outfield. Team 2 stands in line at home plate. The teacher asks a question from Fix the Mistake or Pick the Winner and then tosses the ball to the batter. The batter says the correct word and then throws the ball to the correct word. The team earns one point if the batter says the correct word and two points if he or she hits the correct word. After three incorrect words (strikes), the teams switch. The game ends when the teacher calls time or when all questions are complete. Materials Needed: Use with Fix the Mistake or Pick the Winner for middle-school levels A large photocopy of each word on a separate sheet of paper A foam ball, tennis ball, or crumpled piece of paper How to Expand the Game: You can create additional questions to play this game beyond workbook exercises. To review, students can complete the exercises in their workbooks after the game. If playing outside, you can increase difficulty by playing with a bat. Look Out For: Make sure to use a soft ball (not a softball) so it doesn't hurt any students. Possible Modifications for ELLs and Students with Special Needs: Students can complete exercises in their workbooks before the game starts. Vocabulary is not only the foundation and key element to learning any language but also an important tool in learning other subjects as well. As a teacher, searching for fun and meaningful ways to improve the children's vocabulary in any field is an essential task. And, while traditional lesson plans for teaching vocabulary are the starting-point, vocabulary games are becoming more and more valuable. To help you out, we decided to find and share some of the best vocabulary games for the classroom. First, we'll take a look at the benefits of using vocabulary games in a typical school environment, and then we'll list our favorite vocabulary games with detailed explanations on how to implement them, and how the students will benefit. Without a solid vocabulary in their native language, children will read slower, have a hard time understanding complex sentences, won't be able to express themselves in a clear manner, and might even have trouble organizing their thoughts and memorizing new concepts. A young mind learns new words by developing a mental network that builds elaborate ideas hierarchically. This is why using newly learned words frequently is the best way to reinforce that mental network and make new connections. Vocabulary games are perfect for that task, as they provide a communicative atmosphere where children can express themselves. But the popularity of using vocabulary games in a classroom goes beyond that. Vocabulary games provide a fun-filled and relaxing learning atmosphere. Learning can be stressful for kids who are anxious when answering in front of authority or in front of their classmates, which is why learning through games is a wonderful opportunity. Plus, you'll get a chance to evaluate the children's progress in a spontaneous setting. Another reason why vocabulary games are so beneficial is that they're unpredictable. Instead of memorizing a certain word order, or several definitions, children will have to actively construct the answers from previous knowledge. Games are challenging, motivating, and amusing. This means that most of the time, children will be learning new words or reinforcing newly acquired knowledge, without even realizing it. Here are some easy-to-implement, fun, and meaningful vocabulary games for the classroom. You might know this game under the name "Who am I?" where players use yes or no questions to get clues about a person or fictional character that the other player has in mind or has written on a piece of paper. Our "Guess the word" variation works the same way, except children have to guess which word is written on the piece of paper that's attached to the child's forehead. You can play this game with a time limit or not, depending on how hard you want to make it for the kids. To play, divide the classroom into four or five groups of four to five children. After this, instruct the children in the group to come up with a word on a specific topic (something they've recently learned). Each member of the group should write a word on a piece of paper attached to the forehead of the member on their left (without them knowing what word they got). After this, one by one, students take turns asking yes or no questions (example: "Is my word a verb?"), trying to guess the words on their forehead. You'll need: Little pieces of paper.Pencils. This game works just like a regular memory card game. The only difference is that children will have to match words with their meanings, instead of two identical objects. Aside from practicing their memory skills, children will have to quickly recall the word when seeing the definition and remember it so they can match it once they find the appropriate word in the cards. To play this game, you can divide children into small groups, or let them play in partner-groups. The player that matches most cards wins the game. For practicing English skills, you can buy word cards online. However, if you want to personalize the game and make it much more effective, you can make your own cards with words that children have recently learned in science, math, geography, history, and other subjects. You'll need: Word cards and matching definition-cards. Lightning rounds are super fun and adrenaline-packed games or contests where children, especially hyperactive ones, will get a lot of excitement and laughs. This game is most suited for topics that children are well familiar with. To play, you'll need to divide the classroom into two groups. After this, one player from each group comes forward and competes in defining most words in a specific time limit (one or two minutes). The words can be drawn from a bowl, or as a teacher, you can pick the words, while the players try to define them. The player who succeeds in defining more words wins a point for their group. To make it more fun, you can make categories from which the players can choose a topic. You'll need: An extensive list of words.Pieces of paper and bowl (alternative). This is a game that the whole classroom can enjoy, or you can divide students into two or three groups. Just like the classical and famous Jeopardy game, our vocabulary version is just as fun and challenging. To play, draw a table on the whiteboard, with different categories as rows and the points as columns. The word cards should be taped on the board facing down. This means that the players can choose a category and the number of points they would want to receive, and they'll receive a word. More points mean the words are harder to define. Alternatively, you can choose to make different answers for a different amount of points: one point for telling a word, and three points for defining a word. The group with the most points wins. You'll need: Whiteboard.Pieces of paper. Color markers. While some games depend entirely on the children's knowledge or memory skills, this simple vocabulary game adds the element of luck, which means anything is possible. It's a wonderful game because it evens out the field to a certain point, so children who have a harder time learning new words won't feel too far behind the overachievers. To play, you need to divide students into small groups or play in partner-groups. Give each group a dice and a stack of word cards. Players roll the dice and draw a card. If they can correctly define the word (if given a definition - to guess the word), they receive points according to the number on the rolled dice. Time for answering should be limited so it's more challenging and fun. If the answer is wrong, the student gets zero points in that round. You'll need: Dice (two or more, depending on the number of groups). Word cards. Everyone's familiar with regular checkers, but did you know there's a vocabulary version that's just as popular? Vocabulary checkers is much more stimulating, challenging, and exciting. To play, you'll need a special vocabulary checkerboard, which is just like the regular board, only with blank spaces in the middle of each field that you can fill out with words. The spaces can be predetermined, with words of your choosing, or you could give students the opportunity to write the words themselves (for the opponent player). The added challenge comes with the fact that a player can only move or occupy the square if they correctly define the written word in that square. Other than that, the rules are the same as a regular game of checkers. To take an opponent's piece, they must say 3 synonyms of the written word or use it in a sentence (since the word is already defined by the opponent). You'll need: Checkerboard and pieces. Printable vocabulary checkerboard. In our vocabulary edition, we don't make a strict distinction between Pictionary or Charades, because the rules can be flexible - the main aim is to have fun and go through a lot of vocabulary words. To play, you need to divide the classroom into two groups and assign a topic. One member from each group has to come forward and describe a word or a phrase to its group. The words are given to the players by the opposite group. Whichever team guesses correctly first, gets a point. If both groups fail to guess the words in a specific time frame, neither group gets a point, and new players get new words to describe. In order to make it more educational, you can set some specific rules. For example, players need to use a synonym, define the meaning, or use descriptive sentences. They shouldn't use clues like the number of letters in the word or point to clues without using words. You'll need: Two whiteboards and markers, orSchool board and chalk. The conversation competition is probably one of the most advanced vocabulary games, which means it might be more suitable for middle schoolers or even high school students. The main goal of this game is to improve the children's ability to publicly speak, debate, and construct better sentences. To play, divide the students into pairs. After this, one pair comes forward to compete. As the teacher, you'll give one of the students a list of 10-20 vocabulary words one minute before speaking. Their task is to analyze the words and share a logical, meaningful story with their partner using the words from the list. Their partner (not knowing the words) can ask questions, or reply with their own opinions, which can help the other student use the words faster, or make it that much harder. Once they use all of the words, they sit down and another pair comes forward. The teacher should measure the time for each conversation and the pair that uses all the words in the shortest time wins. You'll need: Word lists (for each pair). This vocabulary game teaches children the importance of individual effort for the success of the whole group. To play, divide the blackboard into two sections, left and right, and write 20-30 vocabulary words in each section. After this, divide the class into two groups and make them form a line (each group in a separate line). Upon your instruction, the first student from each group approaches the board (each in their separate section) and chooses a word for the student behind them to define. Once the second student defines the word correctly, the first student erases the word and goes at the back of the line, while the second student comes to the board and chooses a word for the third in line. The first group that manages to erase all the words in their section wins. You'll need: Chalk or marker.Eraser.A list of vocabulary words. Give each student one page of a newspaper and a vocabulary word. The students should circle every word, phrase, picture, or name that relates to their vocabulary word. After five or ten minutes, each student should present their findings in front of the class - tell them the vocabulary word and explain how the marked words relate to the word. The student that has the most valid and meaningful connections, wins the game. This is also a more advanced game suited for middle school students or older. It's a multi-purpose game where children work on their reading, analytical and critical skills, as well as their creativity. They'll improve their vocabulary, not just by reading, but by actively thinking about new connections between words, and listening to their classmates. You'll need: Hopefully, you liked our list of vocabulary games for the classroom and we guarantee your students will love them. We made sure the games are very easy to implement, don't require too much set-up time, and can be adapted to large and small groups, as well as partner groups. Also, most of the games are simple variations of famous and classic party or family games, which, most likely, children will already be familiar with. This is going to make things a lot easier, as they'll feel comfortable and ready to start playing. But, even if they're not familiar, the games are so simple that kids of all ages can enjoy them. Last but not least, vocabulary games are just one way to engage children in classroom activities, but if you want to find more, check out our blog and subscribe to our newsletter. We can also cover you with educational, interactive worksheets for any subject or grade.