

Games

Using games is another way teachers can involve all learners, teach new skills, and give students opportunities to participate in a variety of ways. Games tend to be fun and nonthreatening. When teachers use games, they provide students with "opportunities to treat each other in prosocial, desirable ways," say nice things to one another, and work actively to include each other (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, p. 27).

Although teachers in the elementary classroom often use games, educators in secondary school classrooms often abandon these approaches in place of more didactic and traditional strategies. Secondary teachers may be apprehensive about using games because they believe that this type of activity will squander important classroom time and diminish curriculum and instruction. In contrast, the creative and effective use of games can boost the participation and interest of students, help teachers make curriculum relevant and more comprehensible, and make abstract concepts concrete (Marzano, 2010). All of the games outlined here are appropriate for students of any age.

Walk It to Know It Walk It to Know It (Udvari-Solner & Kluth, 2007) is a useful tool for enhancing understanding for students who are visual and kinesthetic learners. To prepare for this game, teachers or students design flow charts on paper and then transfer each square to a separate piece of poster board or butcher paper. Then the squares are laid out on the classroom floor and all students walk through the sequence. Teachers might have students explain each step as they walk over it or simply have them read the information on the board or paper aloud. Students might trod over the charts one time or move through them several times over the period of a week or month. Teachers might make charts to teach any number of concepts including the scientific method, steps to solving a binomial equation, or the parts of a business plan. Students also can walk through a timeline or a sequence of events chain (see Figure 10.1 for an example).

Students tend to enjoy Walk It to Know It because it gives them an opportunity to get out of their seats. A lack of movement during the school day can cause some learners to be restless or anxious. It also can be detrimental to learning. Patterson (1997) pointed out that many kinesthetic activities allow students to see a more complete picture of the subject matter and free them from learning inhibitions. These activities also often produce long-term rather than short-term recall (Patterson, 1997). Students with autism who need a lot of movement, especially those who need occasional "walking breaks," may be especially attracted to this game.

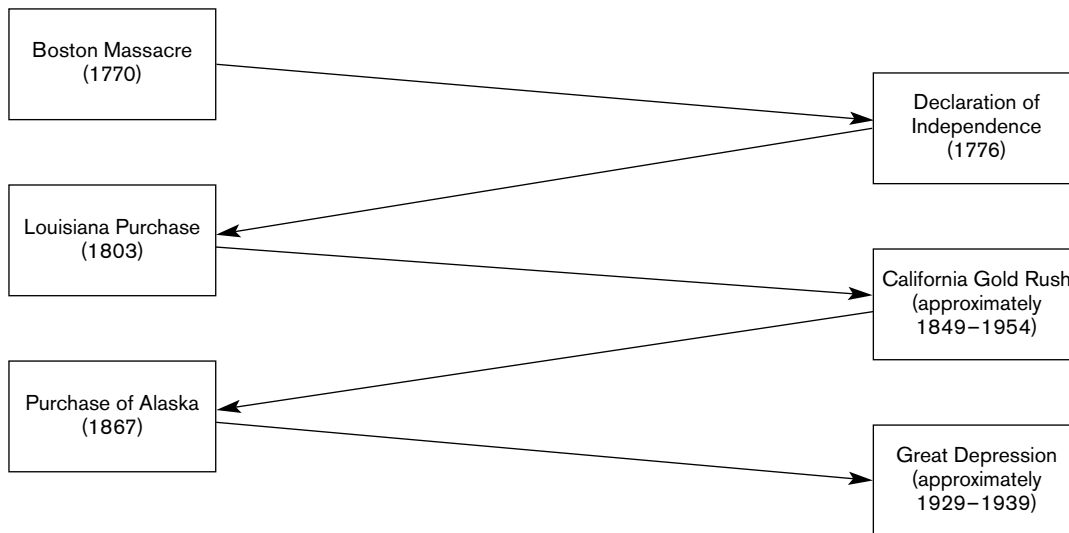


Figure 10.1. A Walk It to Know It timeline of major events of World War II.

Adaptations to Walk It to Know It include the following:

- Ask students to chant the words on each square as they step on them. This will help some learners retain the information more effectively.
- Show students to add movements to each square so they are not only “traveling” through the content but acting it out as well.
- Let students hop through the sequence. Adding this extra bit of movement can give some students an opportunity to release energy in a constructive way.

Match Game Match Game allows students to teach each other. To play, the teacher distributes a card to each student. The teacher needs two groups of cards (A and B); each card in one group (A) must have a matching card in the other group (B). For instance, the teacher might create one group of questions (A) and one group of answers (B); one group of words (A) and one group of definitions (B); or one group of incomplete sentences (A) and one group of words that complete the sentences (B). See Figure 10.2 to view sample cards used to teach students new math vocabulary words.

Every student is given one index card and told to walk around the room, talking to other students and comparing cards. Students are directed to help each other find their matches. Once students have found the individual whose card is a match for theirs, they should sit down next to that person and wait for others to find their matches. Then, pairs can simply read their cards to the others or quiz the rest of the class using the match information.

One teacher used Match Game to showcase the talents of one of her students, Marn, a young woman with autism who was interested in trains. During a unit on transportation, Marn created one set of cards that contained words and phrases related to trains. On the other set of cards she wrote the corresponding definitions. One card, for instance, had the term “run-through” written on it. The definition of run-through, “a train that generally is not scheduled to pick up or reduce cars en route,” was written on another card. Students had to find matches for terms and phrases that were, in most cases, completely new to them. Students had fun learning the new lingo and were impressed with Marn’s expertise in this area. According to the teacher, Match Game provided the first opportunity that students in Marn’s

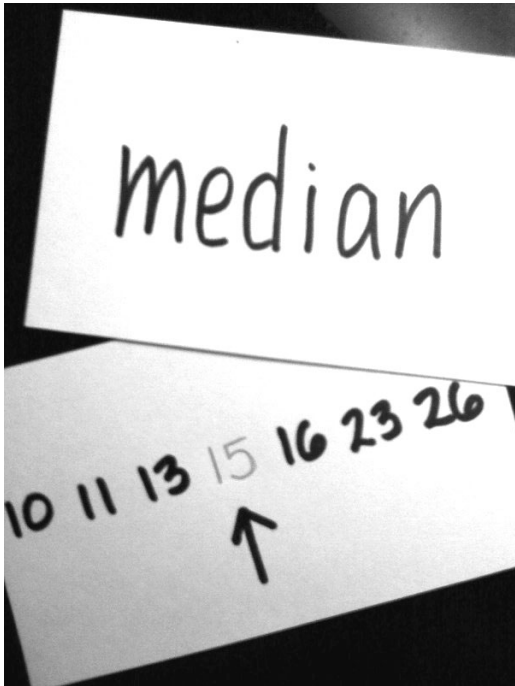


Figure 10.2. Match Game cards for a math lesson.

classroom had to go to her to get help and information. This experience changed students' perceptions of their classmate and gave Marn the courage to share more of her knowledge with others. In addition, all students became interested in Match Game and were anxious to take turns designing their own set of cards for the group.

Adaptations to Match Game include the following:

- Have some students participate in creating the cards; this will be especially rewarding for a student who has particular expertise on a subject
- Encourage students to support each other during the game; remind them that they can help classmates find matches
- Add pictures or icons to the cards if some students learn better this way

The Company You Keep The Company You Keep, a fast-paced and entertaining game created by Mel Silberman (1996), is appropriate as an ice breaker, an introduction to new material, or a review. To prepare for this activity, the teacher makes a list of categories helpful for teaching or reviewing

certain content. Each category should include at least two (if not more) "sides," opinions, or items so that in choosing to affiliate themselves with certain choices, students can form themselves in subgroups. Content areas and categories might include the following:

- Social studies: Agree or disagree with capital punishment
- Math: Do or do not understand how to measure angles
- English: Favorite character from the young-adult novel *An Audience for Einstein* (Wakely, 2005)
- Geography: Spanish-speaking nation you would most like to visit
- Science: Chemistry experiment from which you have learned the most

The teacher clears some space in the classroom or moves students to a hallway. Then the teacher or a student leader calls out a category and students mill around the classroom looking for others in their same category. Therefore, in the first example, students who agree with capital punishment would cluster together and those who disagree would do the same. If the prompt contains multiple responses, the teacher should tell students to cluster together with their small group and make sure they move away from other groups so all discrete groups can be identified.

Once students have formed their groups, instruct them to shake hands with the "company they keep." Then do some debriefing with the class. Students can be asked to teach each other about the category they chose or to explain their choice. For example, if students were asked to choose their favorite character from a book, call on them to defend their choice and ask students in other groups to ask clarifying questions. This discussion among participants can last for as much as 30 minutes (if used to teach a lesson) or during the last 5 minutes of a class period as a recap.

The Company You Keep is ideal for the diverse classroom in that it offers movement and action for students who need to get away from their desks. It gives quiet students structured

opportunities to interact and social students time to talk with their classmates. Social skills also can be taught during this activity. Students with autism might be able to practice greeting people or asking or answering verbal questions.

Adaptations to The Company You Keep include the following:

- Give students different roles during the activity; some might lead the activity while others walk around facilitating the forming of groups.
- Write the prompts on the board so that students can hear and see choices.
- Ask students to sit down together or to link arms once groups have formed so that all students can clearly see where the different groups are. Groups might even be asked to hold up a sign indicating the name of their cluster.

What Is It? What Is It? is a perfect game for injecting laughter into a lesson and for encouraging students to take small risks in front of the group. This game begins with the teacher placing an object in front of the room and asking the group, "What is it?" He or she then encourages students to come forward and transform the object into something related to class content. One student can approach at a time and act out a short scene. He or she can tell the others what they are doing and how they are using the object or students can yell out guesses. For example, a high school English teacher might present a roll of paper towels to the class and challenge students to act out idioms and colloquialisms. One student might grab on to the end of the roll to illustrate "out on a limb" or pass a towel around the classroom to act out "passing the buck." Typically, the more ridiculous the skits are, the better, and the only rule is that students must wait for one student to set the object down before standing up to take a turn. You can have students get up to participate on their own; you can have them raise hands to take turns; or you can have learners pass the object to each other randomly, giving individuals an opportunity to pass if they do not have an idea. After the game, the teacher might give additional information about the performances or even act a few out him or herself

Students with a flair for the dramatic will really enjoy What Is It? This activity can be particularly helpful for students with autism who need help understanding different types of humor, especially if the teacher or a peer takes a moment after each transformation to explain "what is funny" about each of the transformations.

Adaptations to What Is It? Include the following:

- Give some students time to rehearse their "transformations."
- Invite students to come to act out their scenes in pairs or in small groups.
- Show the object and have students brainstorm ideas for transforming the object on paper before attempting to act out a scene.

Human Treasure Hunt Human Treasure Hunt requires every student to gather information by interacting with several different classmates. Each student receives a worksheet with a list of prompts (e.g., "Find a person who knows how to draw the carbon cycle and ask him or her to demonstrate this skill for you"). The objective is for students to find an answer to every prompt on their form (see Figure 10.3 for a sample Human Treasure Hunt). Those who finish early should circulate and offer support to those still working or go back to their desks and design new prompts to be answered.

There are only two rules for this game: 1) Students can only get one answer from each peer and/or participant; and 2) If a student gets an answer from another student, he or she needs to give an answer to that other student. Teachers may also want to insist that students answer each question only a certain number of times.

Human Treasure Hunts can include simple (e.g., label, list) and complex (e.g., compare/contrast) questions, personal questions, questions related to content, or questions that are

Human Treasure Hunt



Instructions: The goal of this activity is to learn as much as you can from the experts in this classroom. You may only get one answer from each person you approach and that person may only get one answer from you.

1. Find a person who can draw a picture of "a force acting through a distance."

A large empty rectangular box intended for a student to draw a picture of "a force acting through a distance."

Have this artist sign here: _____

2. Find someone who can name a use of radioactivity.

Answer: _____

Have this science expert sign here: _____

3. Find someone who will act out, explain, or draw the Doppler effect.

Have this creative individual sign here: _____

4. Find someone who can explain the sinking of the Titanic in terms of density. After the short lesson, have your instructor sign here:

After you are finished, walk around the room and help your classmates finish their treasure hunts.

Figure 10.3. Human Treasure Hunt: Physical science example.

both personal and content-related (e.g., 'Find a person who will write you a Haiku about his or her family'). It is fairly easy to create hunts that allow students to discuss curriculum while sharing something personal at the same time.

Sapon-Shevin (1999) suggested that teachers include items that many students will find relevant and be able to answer. This activity is a perfect opportunity to highlight the expertise, specific gifts, or strengths of individual learners. For example, if a student has just moved from Saudi Arabia, the teacher might include an item related to the Middle East. If a student with autism has a particular interest in U.S. Presidents, the hunt might prompt students to write a three-sentence biography of President Barack Obama.

Adaptations to *Human Treasure Hunt* include the following:

- Allow students to travel.
- Have a few students serve as "hunt helpers"—their job is to walk around and offer assistance to students who are struggling to complete their forms.
- Let students generate their own items. If a peer cannot answer a question verbally, his or her classmate can invent one that can be answered with a gesture, for example.