

Teaching With Games

Lori Verstegen

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. “NO-PREP” GAMES	
A. <i>No-Noose Hangman</i>	2
B. <i>Wheel of Fortune</i>	4
C. <i>Pictionary</i>	6
D. <i>Academic 20 Questions</i>	7
II. MATCHING CARD GAMES	
A. <i>Elimination</i>	8
B. <i>Lightning</i>	9
Sample: <i>Vocabulary Elimination or Lightning</i>	10
C. <i>Hot Potato</i>	14
Multi-Subject Cards for <i>Lightning</i> and <i>Hot Potato</i>	15
D. <i>Find the Card</i>	20
Sample: <i>Gospel Find the Card</i>	21
Sample: <i>Ancient Egypt Find the Card</i>	22
E. <i>Avoid the Card</i>	24
Sample: <i>Complete in Christ—Avoid Sin and Death</i>	24
Sample: <i>Ancient Rome—Avoid Vesuvius</i>	27
F. <i>Round Robin Recall</i>	28
G. <i>Capture</i>	29
Sample: <i>Human Body Systems Capture</i>	30
III. QUESTION GAMES	
A. <i>Jeopardy</i>	34
Sample: <i>Revolutionary War Jeopardy</i>	35
B. <i>The Question Bag</i>	38
C. <i>Tic-Tac-Toe</i>	38
Sample: <i>Iew Writing Tic-Tac-Toe</i>	38
Sample: <i>Planet Tic-Tac-Toe</i>	39
IV. MATH FACTS GAMES	
A. <i>Sum Fun</i>	40
B. <i>Fun Times</i>	41
C. <i>Number Line Tug of War</i>	43
V. “MAKE AS YOU TEACH” GAMES	
A. <i>Lotto</i>	46
Sample: <i>Rock Lotto</i>	46
Sample: <i>Continent Cover-Up</i>	50
B. <i>Bingo</i>	64
Sample: <i>Time Bingo</i>	64
Sample: <i>Geometry Bingo</i>	70
Blank <i>Bingo Boards</i>	75
C. <i>Board Games</i>	78
Sample: <i>The Space Game</i>	78
Sample: <i>Make Your Own Board Pattern</i>	84
Sample: <i>Ancient Artifact Dig</i>	86
APPENDIX: Making a Pocket Chart	89

INTRODUCTION

Games can be an extremely effective way to teach and review concepts in all subject areas. But why is this so? What makes a game such a powerful tool in the classroom?

1. GAMES ARE FUN

Students (and teachers) are more likely to be motivated to spend time doing the things they enjoy. In any type of school, motivation is a prime concern. How many kids, after reading a chapter in a textbook or finishing a worksheet, beg to do it again? Not many. But because games are fun, kids will often want to play them over and over again. And the more time they spend thinking about the information you want them to learn, the more likely they will be to learn it well.

2. GAMES INCREASE LEARNING RETENTION

While playing games, students must not only recall the information taught them, but they must be able to discuss and use the information as well. This means that they must understand it more fully, and they will retain it for a longer period of time. A Learning Retention Chart published by The National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine, shows that the average person retains very little of what he learns by lecture or by reading, but that retention is greatly enhanced when the information must be discussed and/or used immediately after learning it. Games require students to do both.

<u>LEARNING MODE</u>	<u>AVERAGE RETENTION</u>
Lecture	5%
Reading	10%
Audio-Visual	20%
Demonstration	30%
Discussion	50%
Immediate Use / Application	90%

3. GAMES HELP DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

In addition to ensuring that students discuss and use the information you have taught them, many games also require a bit of strategy to win. All together, these help develop a child's critical thinking skills—a higher level of thought than rote memorization and an important goal in the education of a young mind.

Because games can be so valuable in educating children, the purpose of *Teaching With Games* is to provide teachers and homeschooling parents with a variety of multipurpose

games that can be adapted for use with any subject, in any grade level, and with any number of students. And best of all, these games require minimal preparation.

The games in this program are divided into five groups:

- I. “No-Prep” Games
- II. Matching Card Games
- III. Question Games
- IV. Math Facts Games
- V. “Make As You Teach” Games

Note: Samples of many types of games are provided, but remember, you can adapt each type to any subject matter. Do not simply rely on the sample games—venture out and make your own.

Also, when using any game, the best learning will occur if you, the teacher, use the game time as a teaching opportunity. Use game questions as springboards to engage students in further discussion of the information. Don’t let students be in so much of a hurry to win the game that they do not pay attention to what you are trying to teach or review.

I. “NO-PREP” GAMES

This first group of games includes two of the three I use most often in a classroom setting because they are very versatile and can be played at the spur of the moment. They are great time fillers when a lesson is finished a little early as well as a fun way to introduce a new concept or review an old one at the beginning of class.

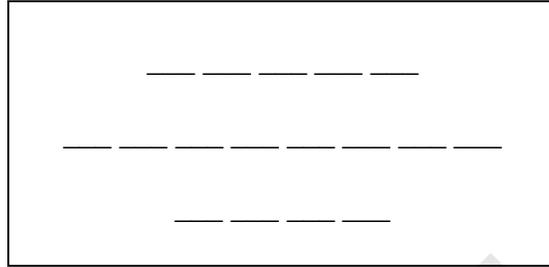
A. *NO-NOOSE HANGMAN*

Supplies: * Whiteboard and marker (paper and pencil work for a small group)

This game is played much like the traditional “Hangman,” but uses phrases instead of words.

TO PLAY: Think of *anything* you would like your students to remember from previous lessons or that you would like to introduce in a new lesson. Put the information in a short phrase. Try to also think of a follow-up bonus question that would elaborate on the information in the phrase. For example, if you wanted your students to remember that the topic sentence and the clincher of a paragraph should repeat or reflect 2-3 key words, your phrase might simply be “TOPIC-CLINCHER RULE.” Once the puzzle is solved, the follow up question could then be, “What is the Topic-Clincher Rule?”

On the whiteboard, draw a blank for each letter in the phrase you have selected. For the above phrase, the whiteboard would look like this:



Students take turns guessing letters, one letter per turn. If the letter is in the phrase, fill it in on the correct blank. If not, write the letter below the blanks so no one else guesses it.

Any time a student knows the entire puzzle, he may shout it out. **It does not have to be his turn to guess.** If he is correct, he gets five points and can earn an extra three if he can answer the bonus question. Repeat with a new puzzle.

TIP: Write your phrase on a 3x5 note card so you can refer to it as needed to help you place guessed letters on the correct blanks. If my phrase has a long word in it, I even number the letters on my card.

SAMPLE TYPES OF PHRASES AND BONUS QUESTIONS

Phrase for the Puzzle

Question

1. A definition of a vocabulary word (any subject)

What is the word?

2. Any fact or concept from a lesson

* *Russia is the largest country*

What is the capital city?

3. The beginning of a list of things that go together

* *(IEW): ww clause, strong verb, quality adjective*

What are the other dress-ups?

* *(Science): Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars*

What is the other group of planets?

* *(Bible): The beginning of a memory verse*

Finish the verse

4. For students just learning to read, a simple sentence as a puzzle is great practice at deciphering words.

VARIATION FOR A SINGLE HOMESCHOOLED STUDENT: Mom and student take turns thinking of puzzles for each other (relating to a lesson). Whoever solves the puzzle with the fewest wrong letter guesses is the winner.

B. WHEEL OF FORTUNE

- Supplies:**
- * Whiteboard and marker (in a small group, paper and pencil are fine)
 - * A die OR a spinner containing the numbers 1-8, “bankrupt,” and “free spin” (Instructions for how to make a spinner are on page 5.)

This is very similar to the previous game, but with some added complexities that add to the fun. In a class, it is best played in three teams.

TO PLAY: You will again think of a phrase and draw a blank on the whiteboard for each letter of the phrase. (Save part of the whiteboard for keeping track of points earned by each team.)

Teams take turns guessing letters, but this time before each guess they must roll the die or spin the spinner to determine the point value of the letter they will guess. So, if the first team rolls a 3, and guesses the letter *s*, and the letter *s* is in the phrase two times, the team would earn six points. As long as the team continues to guess letters contained in the puzzle, their turn continues. A team’s turn ends when they guess a letter that is not in the puzzle or they spin a bankrupt or roll a 1 (see below).

VOWELS: If a team would like to guess a vowel, they must declare so before they spin or roll. Vowels cost five points, so a team must have accumulated at least five points before deciding to guess a vowel. When they do, subtract five from their points.

BANKRUPT: When a 1 is rolled or a bankrupt is spun, the team loses all the points it has accumulated for the current puzzle UNLESS the team has saved a FREE SPIN.

FREE SPIN: When a 6 is rolled or a FREE SPIN is spun, the team has two options:

1. They may use it to take an extra turn after they make an incorrect guess
2. They may save it to cancel out a future bankrupt

Any team may attempt to solve the puzzle at any time. (It does not have to be their turn.) Only the team that solves the puzzle may keep the points they have accumulated for that puzzle. All other teams’ points are erased.

The team that solves the puzzle should be given a bonus question for extra points.

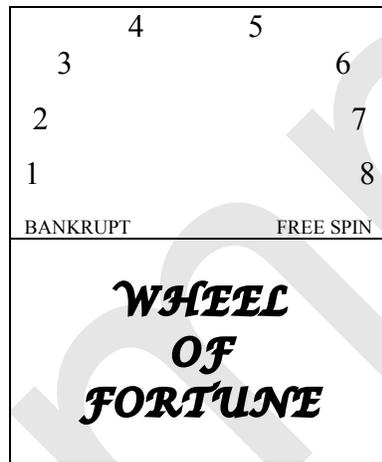
Continue with new phrases. Draw a line under the points won by the team that solved the puzzle as these points cannot be lost in subsequent rounds.

VARIATION FOR A SINGLE HOMESCHOOLED STUDENT: Mom and student can take turns thinking of puzzles for each other. Each should get no more than 12-15 letter guesses per puzzle, rolling the die before each guess. Vowels still cost 5 points. *BANKRUPT* and *FREE SPIN* still apply. The one who collects the most points wins, as long as he/she was able to solve the puzzle.

MAKING A GIANT SPINNER

Supplies: * 2 pieces of poster board and a piece of cardboard the same size
* A large brad
* Markers and glue

1. Using a marker, divide the poster board in half lengthwise. Divide the top half into 10 equal sections. Color them with alternating colors. On the bottom half, write WHEEL OF FORTUNE.



2. Glue or staple the poster to the cardboard.
3. From the other poster board, cut out two identical arrows about two inches wide. In length, they should be almost the full width (not height) of the posterboard. Glue the arrows together. (The double layer adds weight so that it spins better.)
4. With the scissors, poke a hole in the center of the poster and cardboard as well as through the center of the arrow. Use the brad to attach the arrow to the board.
5. Color one end of the arrow black. This will be the end to look at when the arrow lands straight across the BANKRUPT / FREE SPIN spaces.

Note: For home use, you can make a smaller spinner by using only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the poster board.

C. PICTONARY

- Supplies:**
- * Two whiteboards (or one large one with a line drawn down the middle)
 - * Two whiteboard markers
 - * A die or spinner

TO PLAY: Divide the class into two teams. Assign each a whiteboard.

Call one person from each team to the front of the class. Have them each roll the die or spin the spinner to determine the number of points their team will receive if they win the round. Instruct them to write that number on the top of the whiteboard so it is not forgotten.

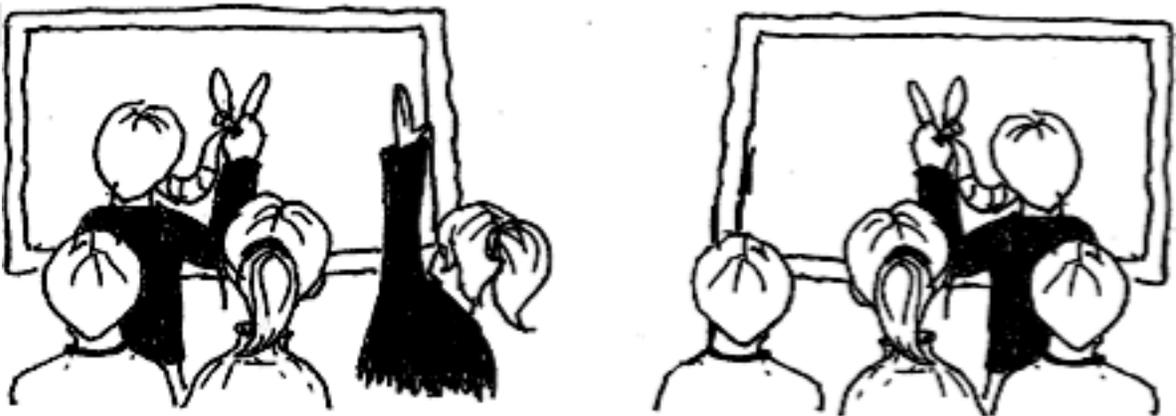
Take the two players away from the rest of the class. Decide what you want them to draw. This can be anything from any subject, preferably things you have recently studied. Here are some suggestions that work well:

- English: a vocabulary word (Pages 10-13 provide some words with picture ideas.)
History: a person or event that you have studied
Geography: a place, a famous landmark, a land feature (i.e., plateau, delta, canyon...),
a particular river, mountain, desert...
Science: any concept or vocabulary word
Bible: person, place, thing (the ark, the tabernacle), concept (salvation, grace,
forgiveness, prayer), event

Both players come to their whiteboard and draw a picture to try to get their team to say the chosen word(s). They may not include any letters or numbers in their drawings. The first team to guess the word(s) receives the number of points rolled on their die. The other team erases the points they had rolled.

Play again with two new drawers.

As with No-Noose “Hangman” and “Wheel of Fortune,” offer extra points if the team that guesses the picture correctly can answer a question about it. For example, if it is a vocabulary word, they would have to tell you the definition.



C. *HOT POTATO*

- Supplies:**
- * Kitchen timer
 - * Set of flashcards (*The cards can simply be single words that in some way relate to anything you have studied. The following pages contain sample word cards from various subjects.*)

This game is one of our favorites.

TO PLAY: Divide the students into two teams. Have all the members of one team wear a baseball cap or something that identifies them as being on the same team. If you have an even number of boys and girls, just divide the class that way and you will not need the caps.

Students sit in a circle so that every other person is on the same team (i.e., boy, girl, boy, girl...). Set the timer for one minute. The stack of flashcards is given to any player with **ONLY ANSWERS** showing (as for *Lightning*), then the timer is started. The player with the cards gives clues to get the players on his team to say the top word on the stack. When they do, he passes the cards to the person next to him (on the other team). That person then tries to get his team to say the next word, so he can pass the cards on. Play continues in this way until the timer rings. When it does, whichever team is holding the stack of cards loses that round and the other team gets a point.

Bonus point: If the winning team can guess (in one try) the word that the losing team did not get when the timer rang, they earn an extra point.

The first team to get 10 points wins.

VARIATION FOR THREE PLAYERS: Rather than playing in teams, each man plays for himself (Mom included). The cards are passed from player to player as above. The player with the cards gives the clues while the others try to be the first to guess the word. The player who guesses correctly receives a point and the cards are passed to the next player. When the timer goes off, the player holding the cards loses that round. Both other players receive three extra points. The first player to accumulate 25 points wins.

Note: To help keep track of points, have a bowl of some type of tokens such as buttons, beans, or coins within reach of the players. Each time a player earns a point, he should grab a token.

Multi-Subject *HOT POTATO* or *LIGHTING* or *PICTIONARY*

(Copy each subject onto a different color of cover stock; then cut out the cards. Copy and use the blank master to add your own.)

Science

volcano	sedimentary rock
mammals	reptiles
atom	Helium
roots	pollen
momentum	simple machines