

Action games

“Why do games work well and what are the criteria for choosing them?”

Chapter 1 on 10-minute games gives a general introduction into why games work well in the language classroom, what the criteria are for choosing games, and how games can be used in evaluating your students. ♦ SEE 10-MINUTE GAMES PAGE 9

“What are ‘action’ games?”

As the name implies, action games require the pupils to move about and they may make quite a lot of noise when playing them. It is therefore recommended that you find a suitable place to play them – perhaps the playground or the school hall or gym. Alternatively, find a classroom where you can move the furniture to one side, and where you know that any noise will not disturb other classes nearby. These games will need more time than the games in Chapter 1.



Think of as many reasons as you can for using action games with primary school children.

1 What’s the time, Mr Wolf?

Aims of the game

This is a traditional game that is useful for practising or revising telling the time (numbers 1 to 12, and *o’clock*) and the question *What’s the time?* It is useful to extend the game to include *quarter past*, *half past*, and *quarter to*. It is simple to play with beginners, but this game must be played in the playground or hall because of the noise. The game works best with a maximum of ten players so divide larger classes into groups.

Playing the game



1 Basic procedure

- Find a space in the playground and show the children how to play the game. Choose one child to be Mr Wolf. He/she must stand against a wall, facing the wall. Show them how to stand so that they cannot see the other children. Choose six to ten children to play the game. They must stand in a line about ten metres behind Mr Wolf. The remainder of the class sits on the ground to watch.
- First, say to the class *What’s the time, Mr Wolf?* and ask the children to repeat it. Tell Mr Wolf to say *It’s two o’clock!* and ask the class to repeat the time.
- Now, tell the players to start walking slowly towards Mr Wolf and to chorus *What’s the time, Mr Wolf?*
- Tell Mr Wolf to say *It’s two o’clock!* and to turn round quickly. The players must stop and stand as still as possible, like statues. If Mr Wolf sees anyone moving, that player must go back to the start.

- Mr Wolf then turns back to the wall and the players start walking forward again, and ask *What's the time, Mr Wolf?* again. Each time Mr Wolf must say a different time.
- At any point in the game Mr Wolf can answer *It's dinner time*, then turn round and run to catch one of the players. If he catches someone they become Mr Wolf.
- The game starts again and continues until all the children have had a go.
- With big classes choose another group to play the game while the others watch or have two groups playing the game at the same time.

2 Extending the game: different times, different meals

- Tell Mr Wolf to say a time with *half past* or *quarter past* or *quarter to the hour*.
- Tell Mr Wolf to change the meals as well, e.g. *It's teatime/breakfast time/supper time*.

3 Extending the game: coursebook guessing game

- This could be done back in the classroom. Choose a page in the coursebook which shows the topic of time in detail.
- Ask the class to divide into pairs, A and B. Child A looks at the page and chooses a time on the clock. B tries to guess what time A is thinking of and asks *What's the time, Mr Wolf? Is it 7 o'clock?* They can have five guesses.
- When they guess correctly or if they fail to guess after five goes, change over and repeat the activity.

2 Postman

Aims of the game

- This is a traditional game that is useful for learning the names of countries or towns. You can extend the activity to writing postcards or letters, after the game.
- You play it with the whole class together in the hall, gym or playground.
- **Lexis:** *hop, skip, crawl, run*; names of towns and countries; *letter, card, parcel*.

Teacher preparation

- Write the names of countries or towns which are known to the children on strips of paper so that there are enough to give one place to each child.
- **Equipment needed:** one scarf for a blindfold, strips of paper for names.

Playing the game

1 Basic procedure

- Show the children how to play the game. Start by asking the children to sit in a circle on the floor. Ask one child to be the person in the middle. This child stands in the middle and is blindfolded.
- Give every child the name of a country or town. Keep a list of these names for yourself.
- Explain that you are going to post things from one place to another, e.g. *I'm sending a letter from London to Madrid*. Tell the children who have these place names to cross to the other side of the circle (i.e. to change places) without being caught by the child in the middle.

- Write these instructions on the board or on a large piece of card if you're going to play this outside. Students must cross the circle in the following ways:

- ... for a letter they hop.
- ... for an express letter they run.
- ... for a postcard they crawl.
- ... for a parcel they skip.

As they cross the circle they must say *I am going to France/Madrid, etc.*

- When they are caught, they change places with the child in the middle.

Note: Ensure that you supervise this game carefully to minimise the risks of overexcitement and accidents.

2 Adapting the game: Who's wearing ...?

- This is played sitting on a circle of chairs. Explain to the children that they can cross the circle when the child in the centre says *Who's wearing the colour ...?* It is not necessary to have a blindfold.
- They must cross the circle as fast as possible as the teacher takes away one chair each time. The child who does not have a seat is out.
- It is best to stop the game after five or six colours and change the child in the centre of the circle. Change the focus to who's wearing certain items of clothing, e.g. trousers, jumpers, dresses, types of shoes (sandals, trainers, lace-ups, shoes with straps, etc.) The children change places when the one in the middle says *Who's wearing ...?*

3 The circus

Aims of the game

This is a traditional game which is useful to teach or revise the vocabulary of animals and the noises they make. It can be used as an extension to an animal story or a coursebook topic on animals. You play with the whole class together, or divided into groups if your class has more than about 15 pupils. You will need to be in the hall, gym or playground.

Lexis: *horse, elephant, tiger, lion, snake, monkey, parrot, ringmaster*; animal noises; instruction: *Make the noise like ...*; question: *What noise does a ... make?*

Extension lexis: *roar, growl, hiss, chatter, squawk, moo, bleat, cluck, crow, quack.*

Equipment needed: a scarf for a blindfold.

Playing the game

1 Basic procedure

- Show the children how to play the game. Write the names of the circus animals on the board or a large piece of paper, and if necessary for your class, go through/revise the names and noises that the animals make.
- Ask the class to stand in a circle. Choose one child to be the ringmaster and to stand in the middle of the circle, blindfolded.
- The children hold hands and skip around the ringmaster until the ringmaster shouts *Stop!*

- The ringmaster then points to one of the children and says *What noise does a ... make?*, naming whichever circus animal he/she chooses. The other child can repeat the noise three times and say *It makes a ... noise*.
- The ringmaster must guess who is making the noise.
- If the ringmaster guesses correctly, the two children change over. If he/she does not guess correctly, continue the game.

2 Extending the game: using your coursebook

- Find the page in your coursebook which has a picture of circus or farm animals.
- Point to, e.g. a horse; ask the class *What noise does a horse make?*
- Reply *A horse neighs*. Ask the class to repeat this and make the noise.
- Point to an elephant and ask the class *What noise does an elephant make?*
- Reply *An elephant trumpets*. Ask the class to repeat this and make the noise.
- Continue the exercise, pointing to each animal and making the noise: *a lion roars a tiger growls a snake hisses a monkey chatters a parrot squawks*
- The exercise can be extended to farm animals: *a cow moos a sheep bleats a chicken/hen clucks a cockerel crows a duck quacks*
- If you prefer, you could do this activity before playing the game. When the ringmaster asks, e.g. *What noise does a lion make?* The child can reply *A lion roars* and can then make the noise.

4 The 'Yes/No' game

Aims of the game

- This is a game that is useful for revising any vocabulary areas that have been learned. It is easily adapted as an activity at the end of a lesson.

Teacher preparation

- Write a list of general questions which require the answer *Yes* or *No*, e.g. *Is Rome the capital of England? Is it raining today?* etc. or personal questions, e.g. *Do you like sweets?*

Playing the game

1 Basic procedure

- Draw a line down the middle of a space in the classroom or playground or stretch a string along the floor.
- Ask the children to stand on one side of the line or string. Tell them *This side is No, the other side is Yes*.
- Ask the children *Has a horse got four legs?* Tell the children, if the answer is *Yes*, they must jump to the *Yes* side of the line or string.
- Ask the children *Is it raining today?* Wait for a reply. Tell them to either jump or stay on the *Yes* side.

Adapting for higher levels

- Ask the children to make up their own questions. Then let the children take turns to read their questions to the rest of the class.

5 Cat and mouse

Aims of the game

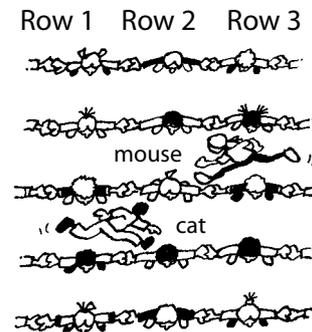
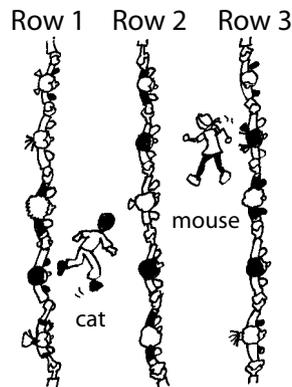
This is a simple game for the whole class that is useful for teaching directions, e.g. *turn right, turn left*. It is a game that can be extended for larger classes to include other animals.

Lexis: *change, turn left, turn right; start, ready, steady, go.*

Playing the game

1 Basic procedure

- Show the children how to play the game. Find a large space in the hall, gym or in the playground as the children need space to run around. Choose two children to be the cat and the mouse and tell the rest of the class to make three or four rows; they must spread out, face the same way and hold hands down the rows. These children form a sort of maze.
- Say *Ready, steady, go!* to start the game. The mouse runs between the rows and the cat then chases the mouse.
- Call out a change of direction: *Change, turn right*. The children whose arms are making the walls of the maze all drop hands and change direction. They turn to their right and hold hands across the rows. Then say *Change, turn left*.



- When the mouse is caught that game ends. Choose a new cat and mouse and play again. To make the cat's task harder, give two children the role of mouse.

2 Extending the game: other animals

For variety, choose other animals, e.g. a fox and a chicken, a lion and a rabbit, etc.



Go through the five action games in this chapter. Which ones are appropriate for your situation in terms of a) language and b) physical activity? Choose one of the games and try it with your class.