



10

HERE ARE 10 DIFFERENT WAYS TO USE WELL-KNOWN GAMES IN AN ESL LESSON

They work well for different levels and ages, making learning feel natural and fun.

1. Bingo – Vocabulary Review

Create bingo cards with vocabulary words or pictures.

- Call out: definitions, example sentences, descriptions

Students must find the correct word on their card.

Example:

"This is an animal that says moo." → cow

This helps with listening comprehension and vocabulary recall.

2. Go Fish – Question Practice

Use vocabulary cards.

Students must ask questions such as:

Do you have a dog? Do you have a teacher?

If the student has the card, they must give it.

If not, they say "Go fish."

This game is perfect for practicing question forms and repetition.

3. Snap – Quick Vocabulary Recognition

Deal cards to students.

Each player places cards face up in a pile.

If two cards match, students shout: "Snap!"

and say the vocabulary word.

Example: "Snap! *Lion!*"

This encourages quick thinking and vocabulary recognition.

4. Simon Says – Listening Practice

Play the classic game Simon Says.

Give commands such as:

Simon says, touch your head.

Simon says, open your book.

If the teacher does not say "Simon says", students should not move.

This helps practice listening and understanding instructions.



10

HERE ARE 10 DIFFERENT WAYS TO USE WELL-KNOWN GAMES IN AN ESL LESSON

They work well for different levels and ages, making learning feel natural and fun.

5. Guess Who – Question Formation

Give each student a character or picture. Students ask Yes/No questions to guess the person. Example questions:
Does he have glasses?
Is she wearing a hat?
This game is excellent for practicing descriptions and question structures.

6. Pictionary – Vocabulary Building

Students draw a vocabulary word. The class guesses the word. Encourage full sentences:
"It is a cat."
"I think it is a teacher."
This helps develop speaking, vocabulary, and creativity.

7. Hangman – Spelling Practice

Choose a vocabulary word and draw a series of lines that correspond to the number of letters in the word. Students guess letters; for each correct guess, the teacher fills in the letter in its correct position. For every incorrect guess, the teacher draws a part of the hangman. This continues until the word is guessed or the hangman is complete.

8. Secret Role

Give each student a secret role such as:
• teacher / chef / football player / singer / doctor
Other students ask Yes/No questions to guess the role. Example questions:
Do you work in a school?
Do you help sick people?
This works well because students feel like they are playing a character.



10

HERE ARE 10 DIFFERENT WAYS TO USE WELL-KNOWN GAMES IN AN ESL LESSON

They work well for different levels and ages, making learning feel natural and fun.

9. Jenga – Question Challenge

Write numbers or symbols on the Jenga blocks. Each number corresponds to a question or task. Example: 1 – Name three animals. / 2 – Ask another student a question. / 3 – Make a sentence using the word “school.”

When a student removes a block, they must complete the speaking challenge.

UNO / TAKI – Colour Categories

Play the game normally.

Each colour represents a vocabulary category.

Example:

■ Red – nouns / ■ Blue – adjectives

■ Green – verbs / ■ Yellow – adverbs

When a student places a card, they must say a word or a sentence from that category.

Benefits

Using familiar games in ESL lessons helps because:

- Students already know how the game works
- Teachers can easily adapt the language level
- Games encourage natural communication
- Students feel less pressure when learning through play
- The same game can be used many different ways

Learning through games keeps students motivated, engaged, and confident in using English.

In English
with Debbie

listen • understand • speak