Spelling Better for Teachers

12 Word Game Activity Cards

Classroom teachers, ESL/EFL teachers, tutors and club leaders

Word Ladder

Players: whole class or pairs. Time: 5 to 10 minutes.

How to play: write a start word and an end word with the same number of letters (COLD and WARM). Students change one letter at a time, making a real word each step, until they reach the end word.

Guess the Word

Players: whole class. Time: 5 to 10 minutes.

How to play: draw a dash for each letter of a word. Students guess letters; fill in correct ones and list wrong guesses. Instead of drawing a figure, give a meaning clue after every three wrong guesses.

Spelling Relay

Players: two to four teams. Time: 10 minutes.

How to play: say a word. The first player from each team writes the first letter on the board, then passes the marker to the next player, who adds the next letter. The first team with a correct spelling scores a point.

Syllable Clap

Players: whole class. Time: 5 minutes.

How to play: say a word and the class claps once for each syllable. Then ask a student to spell the word one syllable at a time. Build up to longer words such as un-be-liev-a-ble.

Root Detective

Players: small groups. Time: 10 minutes.

How to play: give each group a word root and its meaning (port means carry; graph means write). Groups list as many words with that root as they can and explain how the meaning fits.

Mystery Word

Players: whole class or teams. Time: 5 minutes.

How to play: think of a word and give clues one at a time, starting with the hardest (number of letters, part of speech, meaning, first letter). Fewer clues needed means more points.

Alphabet Race

Players: pairs or small groups. Time: 5 to 10 minutes.

How to play: choose a topic such as animals or food. Groups try to write one word for each letter from A to Z in the time limit. Score one point for each correct, correctly spelled word.

Word Sort

Players: pairs. Time: 10 minutes.

How to play: give pairs a set of mixed word cards. They sort them into groups (by spelling pattern, part of speech or meaning) and explain their sorting rule to another pair.

Hot Seat

Players: two teams. Time: 10 minutes.

How to play: one student sits facing the class with their back to the board. Write a word on the board. Their team describes it without saying the word until the student guesses and spells it.

Hidden Words

Players: individuals or pairs. Time: 5 minutes.

How to play: write a long word on the board. Students find smaller words using only its letters, each letter used no more times than it appears. The longest list wins.

Fix the Mistake

Players: whole class. Time: 5 minutes.

How to play: write three or four sentences, each with one misspelled word. Students find the mistake in each sentence and write the correct spelling. Discuss why each word is tricky.

Rhyme Time

Players: whole class or teams. Time: 5 minutes.

How to play: say a word such as light. Teams take turns saying a rhyming word and spelling it. Notice when rhymes use different spellings (light, kite, height) and list them on the board.

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