



# Engaging Instructional Games

## The Numbers are Snowballing:

- The main rule is everyone must remain quiet unless she points to them.
- You begin by pointing to one student and stating a math fact to them (make sure it is a developmentally appropriate math fact).
- The student can think all he or she wants but must not say “uh, “um”, “hmmm”, etc. ---They can ONLY say the answer.
- When the student replies you quickly turn to another student, point, and give them a problem to solve---example: add five, subtract 3, multiply by 2, etc.
- If the student did not hear the answer, was not following along mentally, or says anything other than the answer the game starts over.
- The goal is to reach 100 (or another decided number) with no mistakes.
- Keep track of how far you get without a mistake and always strive to at least surpass our highest score.
- The game works well because students struggling with math can be called upon early in the game and given simpler problems, while the math wizards can be challenged.

## Around the World

- This might be my favorite time filler, quick game. Around the World works best with a set of flashcards – can be math, vocab, sight words, or spelling.
- You have all your students stand up, the first student stands next to the student behind them. You show a flashcard and whoever is the fastest to say the correct answer moves on. The idea is to be the best in the whole class.
- For a bonus, if a student makes it all the way around the room then they get to go against me. They LOVE this. “What, beat Mrs. Pak?!?!?” Since I’m the teacher and I know the answers faster, I give them 3 tries to beat me. If they beat me, then the next time we play around the world they get to be the ‘teacher’.

## Memory



- Memory can really be looked at as a simplified version of bingo. This works great with phonics, simple math expressions, for ESL students (think images and words), spelling, and states with capitals.
- I don't think there are as many educational memory games out there as are bingo games, so it might take some time on your part to do the construction. But once you make it and laminate – BAM, you have it forever.

### Hangman

- Hello spelling and vocabulary. I think that aside from flashcards, Hangman might just be the easiest game to play. And it's a fantastic time filler.
- I love to use Hangman when introducing new topics that we are going to study in class, or clues as to what the assembly is going to be about. I also like Hangman as a way to get to know students, or to tell everyone book titles of upcoming stories. So easy and so fast.
- Plus, you can just as easily have your students come up to the board and have them pick the word. I haven't met a student yet who didn't want to do that.

### Get Out of Here

- 'Get Out of Here' is a fun game I like to play right before the end of the day, right before recess, or lunch. I stand in the doorway with either a set of Trivial Pursuit questions or flashcards.
- In order to get out of my classroom you need to answer 3 questions correctly. If not, you head to the back of the line and start over.
- For students who answer those questions correctly, they can get out of my room earlier than others. And who doesn't love that?

### Jeopardy

- This is such a fun game. There are already lots of middle and high school teachers who utilize Jeopardy type games. And why not? It's great to use as a studying tool before a big test. It also works so well for when preparing for the end of a unit, midterms, or finals.
- There are plenty of free Jeopardy templates for teachers available online. This helps make prep time for this game more manageable.



- If you play Jeopardy enough times, you could actually make it a project for small groups of students to create their own component of Jeopardy, under a certain heading, and have the whole class play together. This game is perfect for studying social studies, the arts, science, history, novels...the list goes on and on.

### Fast Facts

- This game consists primarily of giving students 100 simple math problems and a limited amount of time to use them. I use this daily with my elementary students and tutoring students.
- The whole idea is to get your students to understand these math problems so well that it becomes rote. For 100 problems for a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader, give them 5 minutes; a 4<sup>th</sup> grader gets four minutes; a 5<sup>th</sup> grader gets three minutes; and a 6<sup>th</sup> grader gets one minute.
- This same idea can be applied to pronunciation of words. With two students, give one a timer and the other has 100 words that they have to say correctly. The same time structure applies too. It's quick, it's easy, and it's a great way to work on a skill.

### Scavenger Hunts

- Scavenger hunts are a lot of fun, but they definitely take some planning to get set up. The great thing is, they can be used for nearly every subject.
- I like to set up a scavenger hunt for when starting new social studies, science, or reading units. I go through the material beforehand and I create questions, fill-in-the-blank, pictures, dates, and people – anything that I want my students to really know before we get into the unit. And then I put them into small groups and they have to search the textbooks, encyclopedias, online, and around the classroom for the clues.
- If I'm really on my game (meaning I've had enough coffee) I try to get other classrooms involved and have students go to visit there for clues. It's so much fun. I've tried doing scavenger hunts when doing nature units – but that does present the logistics on keeping an eye on all students, so plan accordingly if you decide to go that route.