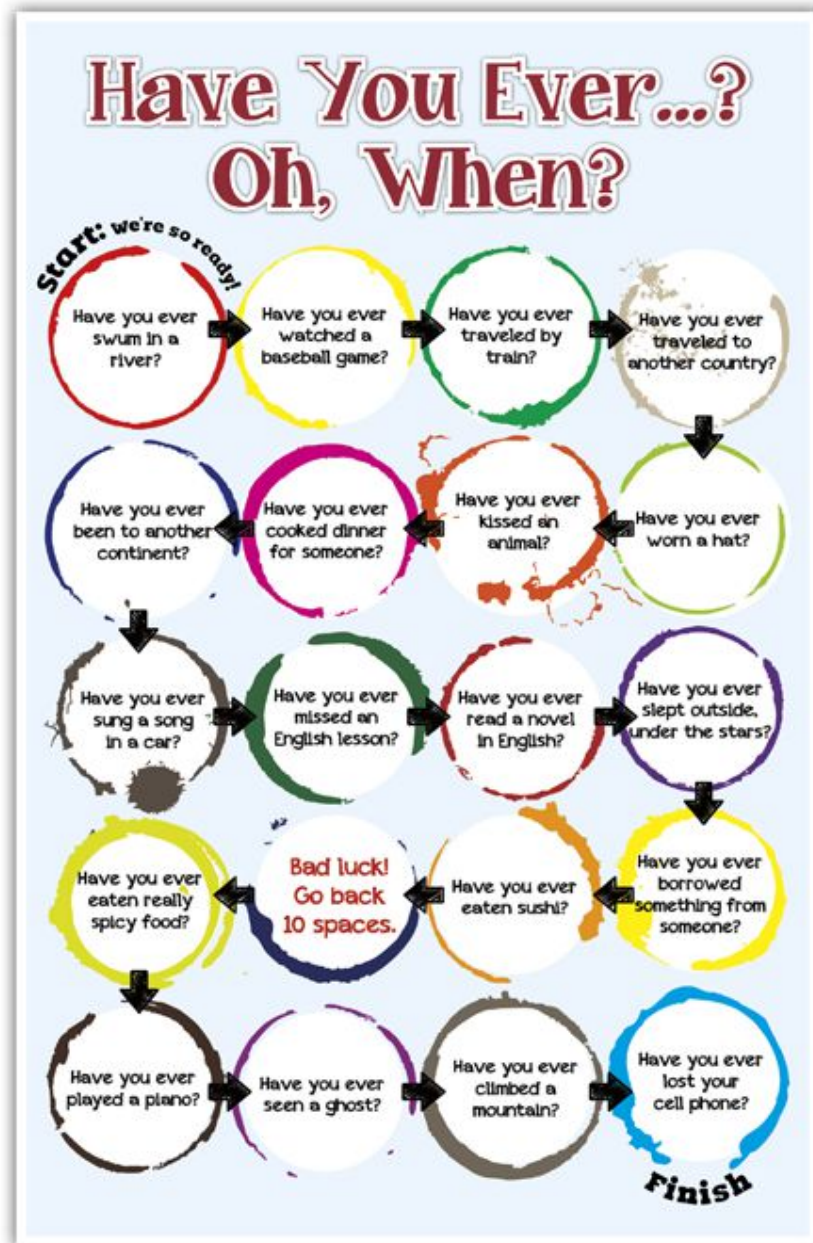


Board Games



ABOUT BOARD GAMES

Activate: Games for Learning American English includes 11 board games. The colorful boards show the paths that the players must follow and the English phrases that the players must produce orally if they land on a particular space on the board. The players' goal is to move ahead as fast as possible to the "Finish" space. Each turn allows them to move forward by the number of spaces indicated by their roll of the dice, but some spaces result in penalties that keep them from moving forward.



Each board game has a theme that requires the students to produce certain types of expressions, so they practice a variety of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and functional meanings. The themes also provide players with an opportunity to be creative in making up sentences that express their own ideas on particular topics.

Something I
really enjoy
doing is...

While each of the 11 board games has its own visual appearance, the games share the same basic structure. They are designed to support a path in which players take turns moving their individual game pieces from one space to the next. Spaces contain prompts, or cues, that players respond to orally when they land on the space. Once learners play their first game, little instructional time is needed for learning the other games. Moreover, the teacher and students can create their own board games using the models provided in *Activate: Games for Learning American English*.

STUDENTS' ROLE

In groups, students take turns rolling the dice and moving their game pieces along the spaces on the path on the game board. Students land on a space and respond to the prompt by using their personal experience, imagination, and/or critical thinking skills to form answers. The students' responses in each game are open-ended, and there is never one correct answer. Thus, there is no need for an answer key. While one player is speaking, the other players should be listening carefully because they are responsible for remembering the responses that were given on each of the spaces. One rule in each of the games is that a player needs to say something new each time he or she lands on a space. If a player attempts to repeat, the other players need to recognize the repetition and not accept the response.



Because there are no fixed answers, each player responds according to his or her own level of proficiency in English. That means that these games are suited for a broad range of learner levels: from lower intermediate to advanced. The two or more sample responses that are provided with the directions of each game often reflect this by showing simple and complex responses that might be produced by students at different proficiency levels.

TEACHER'S ROLE

Before Play

When board games are introduced for the first time, students might be unfamiliar with the concept. The teacher should introduce students to the important terms they need to know:

dice. Players will roll or throw the dice to see how many spaces on the board they will move. Only one is needed for each group. Teachers can find instructions and a template for making dice in the *DIY!* section on pages 34 and 38. *Die is the singular form of dice. However, in common usage *dice* is often used for both the singular and plural forms.



game piece. This small piece, which represents each player on the board, is moved according to the number that appears on the dice after it is rolled. Possible objects for game pieces include coins, balls of colored paper or clay, paper clips, plastic figurines, or even uniquely shaped or colored rocks.

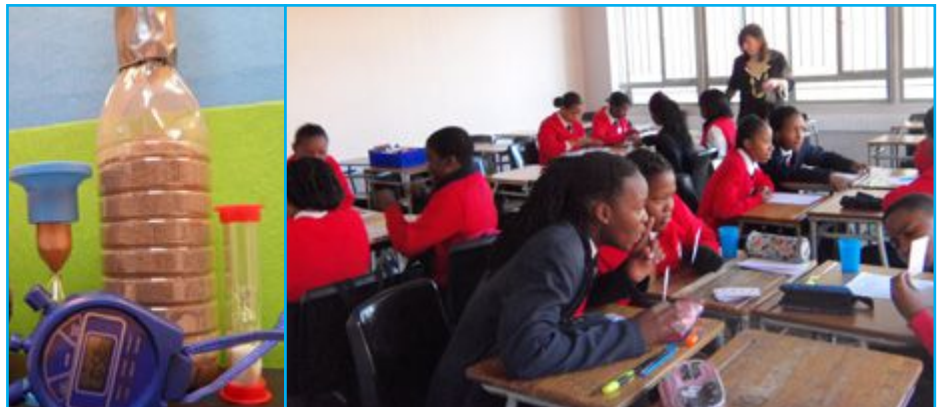
Activate: Games for Learning American English includes 11 board games, including *About Me*, the game that is introduced as an example to explain the basic procedures and rules for board games. The games can be photocopied so that each one can be used by a small group of students. For a class of 60 students, for example, 12 photocopies of one game will allow 12 groups, each with five students, to play. If 20 copies are made, 20 games can be played simultaneously, each with three students.

For students to get a lot of playing time and English practice, the ideal group size for a game is three or four students. When groups are larger, each student gets less time to practice speaking. Teachers should remind students that one of the purposes of playing board games is to have an opportunity to speak English.

The teacher should make sure that each group has a game board and dice and that each player has a game piece. Students should be seated around a small table or desk so that there is a common area where the board can be placed for all of the students to see it and work on it.

The teacher should demonstrate the game so that students know how board games work and what is expected of them. The teacher should explain the idea of taking turns. In the board games in *Activate*, each player gets just one roll of the dice per turn. This is to ensure that everyone participates more or less equally. This demonstration time is also a good opportunity for teachers to teach or review the language that the students will need as they play.

The teacher can set a time limit. Each game takes approximately 7–15 minutes to play. If students know their time is limited, they typically will get started faster. The teacher should also remind students not to write on the game boards so that they can be used in the future.



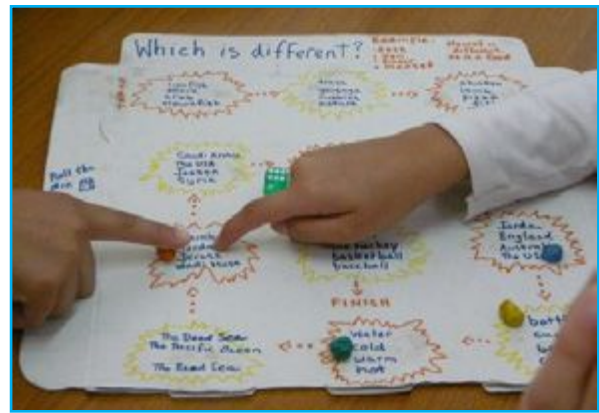
During Play

During the game, the teacher should circulate among the groups. Some students may ask for help understanding a word or phrase; some may have other questions. The teacher should respond to questions as quickly as possible without interfering in the game. The teacher should listen and show interest in the students' ideas and opinions.

Some students may want the teacher to referee, i.e., to say what the correct answer is. However, there is not one correct answer for each space. For this reason, students will be motivated to work cooperatively. They may even adjust the rules; for instance, they may help each other. This is fine, as long as students are playing and practicing speaking English.

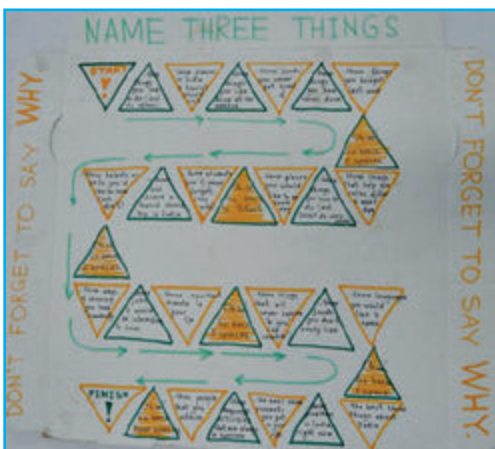
If one team finishes before the others, the teacher should be prepared with one or more of these follow-up options:

1. Ask students to discuss any spaces they've missed on the board.
2. Give them a new game.
3. Ask them to re-play the game using one of the recommended variations.
4. Give them a short crossword puzzle or another easy task.



After Play

When the game is finished, or after the specified amount of time, the teacher can review for a few minutes. Students can be asked to share any interesting ideas they heard from their classmates. Teachers can focus on the grammatical patterns and their meanings in the sentences that the students produced. Students can be asked who won the game in each of the groups and if they have any suggestions for improving how the game is played in the class. The teacher should collect the materials and store them for their next use.



More Play

To get the most out of the board games, the teacher can have student groups play different games at one time. For example, in a class with 33 students, the teacher can use all 11 board games included in *Activate: Games for Learning American English*, with three students at each game. A time limit for playing can be given, and upon completion of each time period, the game boards can be rotated from one group to the next.