



Digital Play has so far argued on behalf of using computer games in the language classroom. We have provided an extensive explanation of the various types of game and the many, many games to be exploited. So what is the next step? To play.

Game on!

Before using digital play with your learners, *you* need to be suitably prepared – the more you know about games, the better you will be able to teach with them. And the more you know about what games your learners like, the more you'll find to inspire them when it comes to using games when practising language.

The non-connected classroom

It could be that in your teaching situation you can't play computer games with your learners in class. But not having access to a computer doesn't mean you can't engage in digital play – in the wider sense of the word – although the focus will be more on digital play *about* games rather than with games.

The connected classroom

Let us suppose you have one computer in your classroom, connected to the internet and perhaps displaying the image through a projector to a large screen or an interactive whiteboard. With only one machine available, the challenge here is for the learners to get hands-on digital play experience – and for the teacher to avoid being the 'sage on the stage'.

Multiple connections

If you are lucky enough to have access to multiple computers then you have access to a huge degree of flexibility in what you can do with your learners to practise language through digital play. You could be using a class set of netbooks, laptops or tablets – or perhaps you have access to a computer room. Whatever, multiple connections mean multiple opportunities.



In Part B, then, we offer game plans for a bank of seriously playful – or playfully serious? – activities in three possible teaching scenarios. In Part C, we will be suggesting ways of integrating individual games into your syllabus, suggesting possible ways of accessing them for easy retrieval. For the moment, we simply highlight the *language skills* – listening, speaking, reading or writing – that are most prominently emphasised in each game.

It's not real!

Game world versus real world

The aim of the game

To compare the virtual world to the real world, saying how real life is different



Prepare to play

Think of a popular game world and write some sentences comparing what can be done there as opposed to the real world (see the example below). Make sure you mix the verbs you use: *can*, *can't*, *have to*, *don't have to*, *don't need to*, etc.

Pacman

You can't stay in one place for a long time.
 You have to eat a lot of cherries to survive.
 You have to run fast or you will be eaten.
 You mustn't sleep.
 You need to avoid lots of different-coloured ghosts.

Play

- Tell the learners you are going to read out some sentences about a game world that compare it to our world, and that you want them to listen carefully and guess which game you are talking about.
- When the learners have guessed, ask them to work in pairs and think of similar sentences about a different game world that they both know, using the same structures (eg *You can fly in the game, but you can't in real life*).
- In their pairs, the learners take turns to read out their sentences to see if their partners can guess the game. When they have finished, they change partners and read out their sentences again.
- While they are doing this, monitor and note down any examples you want to draw attention to.
- Finally, ask the learners to repeat the activity but – instead of using *can* and *can't*, etc – to compare different aspects of the worlds in other ways (eg *The game world is flat, but our world is 3D*).

Play on

The learners can think of their ideal game world, invent a name for it and write five sentences about it.

What game am I?

A game guessing game

The aim of the game

To answer questions about a game and then quiz each other



Prepare to play

Make copies of a 'What game am I?' worksheet (see the example below) for each learner.

What game am I?

Imagine you are inside the world of the game you have chosen. Answer the following questions:

- 1 I am _____ (age)
- 2 I look _____ (adjective of physical description)
- 3 I am wearing _____ (clothes)
- 4 It's _____ (time of day)
- 5 I am carrying _____ (some of the things you have with you)
- 6 I feel _____ (adjective of feeling)
- 7 I look around me and I see _____ (description of the place)
- 8 I have to _____ (what you have to do)
- 9 I can't _____ (something you are not able to do)
- 10 _____ (one more clue)

Play

- Tell the learners to choose a game – they are going to have to answer questions on it.
- Give them a copy of the worksheet, or dictate the sentences, and then ask them to complete the questions as best they can for the game they have chosen.
- The learners take turns reading out their sentences, to see who can guess the game first. Award a point to the one who guesses first. If nobody guesses, the point goes to the learner who asks the questions.
- Play until all the learners have had a turn, and then declare the winner.

Play on

You can ask the learners to tell you which of the statements were most helpful when guessing the game, and to think of other statements that would have made the guessing easier.

Tactical talking

Details of duty

The aim of the game

To do a fluency activity that uses a game as an incentive



Prepare to play

For this activity, you'll need a 'first person shooter' game with a lot of movement. Play the game and think about whether the language needed to give instructions to the character is appropriate to the level of your class.

Play

- Ask the learners if they know what a mercenary is (*a soldier who fights for money*). Tell them that they have hired a mercenary who is very happy to fight for them but will only do exactly what they tell them to do.
- Put learners into teams and ask them to observe carefully as you play a game.
- Stop after a minute and turn the screen of the game off. Tell each team that they are to write instructions to the mercenary, based on what needs to be done in the game.
- Set a time limit of five minutes and help the teams with any language they need, but don't help them remember what happens in the game.
- When the time is up, collect the written instructions and ask a volunteer learner to start to play the game as you read. Tell this learner that they must do exactly what you say and not react 'normally' in the game.
- The learner plays the game, following the spoken instructions until they lose a life. At this point, make a note of the score, change the volunteer and read a different team's text.
- Continue until all of the teams' texts have been read.
- When all the texts have been read out, give them back and ask the teams to rewrite them to make them better.
- If there's time and interest, play another round, count up the score and declare the winning team.

Play on

You can introduce the learners to a different game and ask them to play it and write a set of instructions for homework.

Little monster

Classroom pet

The aim of the game

To make looking after a virtual pet a regular part of your class



Prepare to play

This activity is designed for young learner classes and you'll need to select a 'virtual pet' game such as *Moshi Monsters* (www.moshimonsters.com).

Play

- Set up an account with the site (if appropriate) and think about whether you want to share the user name and password with the class. The advantage of this is that the members of the class can 'look after' the virtual pet in between classes.
- Introduce the site to the learners and decide on a name for the virtual pet. If there are any other choices to be made, work through these together and negotiate, taking a vote if it's not clear what a decision should be.
- We suggest you do not play for longer than 10–15 minutes each class. It also works best if you have a specific regular timeslot in your lessons when you play with this pet (ie at the beginning, or just after a break).
- Be sure to make the most out of the virtual pet by talking to the learners while you play, deciding together on what to do next.

Play on

The virtual pet will also serve as a character in stories that you then ask the learners to write.

Two by two

Passive pairs

The aim of the game

To predict what to do with a list of paired objects, checking the answers by playing the game



Prepare to play

Choose an 'adventure' game and start playing it. As you play, make a note of what you do with the objects that appear in the game (or use the walkthrough to save time) and produce a list similar to the example opposite. Make a copy of the list for each learner.

You will also need online dictionaries.

Play

- Hand out your list of objects and tell the learners they are to guess how they are used together in the game.
- Ask the learners to talk together in groups of three and to use the online dictionaries to find out the meaning of the words they don't understand.
- After 15 minutes, stop them and ask them to tell you what they think the relationship is between each pair of objects in the game:
 - *I think you use the hairpin to open the shed.*
- The learners play the game together. It should be easier to play because they know which objects they need to use together. However, if they get stuck, encourage them to read the game walkthrough to find out what to do next.
- Finally, once they have played the game (or part of a long game), ask the learners to look again at the pairs of words and to write about them. Encourage the use of the passive voice here:
 - *The hairpin is used to open the shed.*

Play on

The learners can continue playing the game in their own time and finish off writing passive sentences about the objects.

Hetherdale

Look at these pairs of objects – there is a relationship between them. What do you think you have to do with them during the game?

hairpin & shed claw hammer & canopy
 magnesium flare & dark path
 canopy & burning trunk wheel chock & rope ladder
 nails & planks of wood
 chisel & wall hand grenade & dam
 winch chain & tombstone
 engine oil & tombstone steel rod & loose brick
 plume & microscope
 axe & reeds guitar string & broken crossbow
 make-up kit & statue

www.bubblebox.com/play/adventure/1747.htm