

# Playing with Questions-A Game for Young Learners

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## Introduction

Teaching a foreign language can be most enjoyable and relaxing. Yet, most learners feel that an appropriate lesson consists of traditional tasks with lots of writing and reading, listening to the teacher and speaking with the fellow partners in class during activities. When a lesson consists of a game, then it is not a lesson in the eyes of the young learners and, therefore, it is greatly appreciated. Still, it is such a lesson that gives the teacher the opportunity to help the learners acquire new forms and lexis in the easiest and most effective way. It does not have to be a complicated game with a board, cards and dice. What is simple is usually more effective with the young learners who find it difficult to understand a long list of rules. Very often a teacher finds activities in course books that can easily be turned into a game. This game was based on a similar table in the course book for Primary School, used as a drilling activity. By turning it into a game, it becomes far more exciting and challenging.

## Aims

Firstly, this lesson aims at teaching young post-elementary learners the right form of questions. The most frequent error is 'Did he played tennis?' and 'Did she swam fast?' or 'Does she plays tennis?' This game aims at teaching them that in the interrogative form of present simple and past simple they should use the infinitive form of the verb.

The teacher may use the same table form for other tenses, such as the 'be going to' form or present continuous (with a present or future meaning) and adapt the boxes depending on the requirements of each tense. The aim remains the same, i.e., the right way of using the interrogative form.

Secondly, many learners have a problem with the word order. This could be a transfer error from their mother tongue. For example, the sentence 'Paul read a book in his bedroom last week' has a certain word order in English whereas in my learners' mother tongue (Greek), the same sentence can be said in many different ways just by arranging the word order differently. Therefore, when it comes to English, they also say the words in random order as well. In the particular lesson they are taught that they must first state the subject, then the verb stating the action, then the place the action occurred and finally the time of the action.

## Timetable Fit

This game can be included in the syllabus after the tense has been introduced. It can be used for practice and consolidation. The lesson takes about 50 minutes to conclude.

## Procedure

- The learners are split in groups of three or four. They are all given a handout.
- The teacher composes a completely different sentence for each group by picking one phrase from each box

Group A Janet wrote a letter in the garden last week.

Group B Mary found a toy at school this morning.

Group C Susan made a model plane in the park last Sunday.

Group D Victor drank some milk near the lake two weeks ago.

The goal of each group is to find their full sentence first, moving step by step across the boxes.

- The groups ask questions in turn. First, they must find the person chosen by the teacher for their group choosing a name from the first box 'Who'. (e.g., 'Was/Is it Jane?')
- Then they must find what this person did/does choosing a phrase from the second box 'What' (e.g., Did Jane take some

photos?).

- Then they must find where this person acted choosing a phrase from the third box 'Where' (e.g., Did Jane take some photos at school?).
- Finally they must find when the person acted to complete their sentence, choosing a phrase from the fourth box 'When' (e.g., Did Jane take some photos at school last week?).
- The game ends when all the groups have completed their sentence.

## Rules

- If a question is wrong, the teacher does not reply but only indicates 'Wrong question' and moves on to the next group. If the learners cannot understand what their mistake was, the teacher tries to help them locate their mistake.
- The teacher always gives short answers: 'Yes, it was/is' or 'No, it wasn't/isn't' for the first set of questions, and 'Yes, he/she did/does' or 'No, he/she didn't/doesn't' for the rest of the questions.
- The teacher may want to include a disciplinary rule saying that if the learners are too noisy in their effort to agree on a question, they miss a turn.
- The teacher should point out to the learners that if a phrase has been chosen for one group, it cannot be chosen for another, so they should avoid asking such a question.
- Every time a group finds part of their sentence, the teacher writes it on the board, so that all the learners can see the progress of all the groups.

## Variations

There can be variations of the game depending on the teacher's objectives. Here there are games for the following tenses:

- Present Simple [present\\_simple.pdf](#)
- Past Simple [past\\_simple.pdf](#)
- 'Be going to' future [going\\_to.pdf](#)

A teacher can, however, improvise a similar handout for any other tense.

## Conclusion

Young learners love to play and participate in a game with more enthusiasm and willingness than in any other classroom task. The competitive element of this game enhances their willingness to participate in order to achieve their goal and it does not matter if they make a mistake or lose because, after all, it is only a game and not a test. On the other hand, the cooperation that exists within the groups makes the game stress-free encouraging even the weaker learners to take active part in it knowing that the better learners are there to help them when necessary. Therefore, the atmosphere is very positive, anxiety-free and relaxing! Yet, experience has taught me that attention has been paid on accuracy of form and learners remember the right way of asking a question.

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