

THE BOSS KEY TO MAKING

KICK-A** GAMES

OVERVIEW:

- 1.) BACK POCKET GAMES
- 2.) MAIN ACTIVITY GAMES: THE FINE LINE BETWEEN GOOD GAMES AND BAD GAMES
- 3.) TAILORING GAMES TO YOUR LESSON
- 4.) FINAL NOTES

BACK
POCKET
GAMES

WHEN ARE BACK POCKET GAMES USEFUL?

- ▶ Sometimes your JTE might finish their lesson earlier than anticipated. In cases like this, they might ask you to utilize the last 10 minutes of class with a quick activity.
- ▶ Other times, your JTE might have to step out of class for one reason or another and ask you to keep the students entertained.
- ▶ In conclusion, these are games that are always ready, even if you're not.

ALWAYS HAVE A BACK POCKET GAME!

- ▶ What makes a good back pocket game?
 - ▶ Ready in a moments notice
 - ▶ The directions are easy to understand
 - ▶ You can even use a back pocket game multiple times. In this case, the students will often remember the directions, minimizing the prep time.
 - ▶ Little to no materials needed
 - ▶ Think “Sorts and Mingle” or “Vocab Race”
 - ▶ You can’t have a back pocket game if you need markers, and whiteboards, and handouts because you can’t exactly fit those in your back packet, can you?

FIND A COUPLE OF BACK POCKET
GAMES THAT WORK FOR YOU, OR
MAKE YOUR OWN!

KEEP THEM LIGHT, FUN, AND SIMPLE.

MAIN ACTIVITY GAMES

THE FINE LINE BETWEEN A GOOD GAME AND A
BAD GAME

6 SIMPLE RULES:

1. Keep the game simple, but not too simple.
2. Always do a demonstration with your JTE.
3. Keep in mind the level of each class.
4. Encourage JTE participation.
5. Learn how to split the class into groups.
6. Speaking practice goes a long LONG way.

#1 KEEP THE GAME SIMPLE, BUT NOT TOO SIMPLE.

- ▶ There is a fine line between making a game with rules that are too complicated, and making a game with rules that are vague.
 - ▶ Too complicated: Even if the rules make sense to you, remember, you think in English, they don't. They're not going to understand the rules of Magic the Gathering, no matter how many times you explain it.
 - ▶ Too vague: Telling your students to have "free conversation practice" for 10 minutes won't work. They'll just sit in silence, or start chatting with their friends in Japanese. They need more direction than that.
- ▶ When in doubt, keep it simple. Over time you'll get a feel for the level of your students, and how complicated their games can be.

#2 ALWAYS DO A DEMONSTRATION WITH YOUR JTE!

- ▶ This is vital!
 - ▶ When we speak at our students in English only, they can zone out and stop paying attention!
 - ▶ Therefore, if you simply tell them the directions to the game, at least half of the students will be completely lost.
- ▶ After you explain the rules verbally, do a quick demo with the JTE to make it all click.

#3 KEEP IN MIND THE LEVEL OF EACH CLASS

- ▶ Everyone knows that each school's english level can vary quite a bit, but most new ALTs don't realize that there can even be huge differences in English ability from one class to another, **EVEN IF THE STUDENTS ARE IN THE SAME GRADE!**
 - ▶ For example, your second year class A might be filled with little English prodigies, while your second year class B might not be able to count to 10..... (okay that's an over exaggeration)
- ▶ Make sure to keep notes of each classes skill level. Then when you make your activities, you can make them a little simpler or more difficult depending on the class.

#4 ENCOURAGE JTE PARTICIPATION

- ▶ Pretty self explanatory.
- ▶ Students love seeing their teachers make fools of themselves.
- ▶ Also, hearing answers to questions in both native pronunciation and a JTE's pronunciation can help the students tremendously.

#5 LEARN HOW TO SPLIT YOUR CLASS INTO GROUPS

- ▶ Think of it as the path of least resistance.
- ▶ Each JTE usually has a way they like to split their class up into groups, whether it be shoulder partners, clusters of 4, etc.
- ▶ Try to use the JTE's method when doing group activities because the students will already be used to these groups, and can break into them quickly.
- ▶ If the JTE rarely does group work, then try to use the same groups for multiple activities throughout the year. If you do, every time you say, "okay split into groups of four," (for example) your kids will know exactly what to do.

#6 SPEAKING PRACTICE GOES A LONG LONG WAY!

- ▶ In many schools, JTEs will teach their English classes in Japanese.
- ▶ Furthermore, the focus of the English curriculum in Japan revolves around “test taking English.”
 - ▶ In other words, reading comprehension, writing, short answer questions.
- ▶ You are likely THE ONLY opportunity the students will get to practice speaking English, and if you’ve ever tried to learn Japanese in a country where you can’t practice speaking it, you know how impossible it is.
- ▶ When you’re picking out or making games, try to get some good speaking practice in. The students will benefit greatly from it.

TAILORING GAMES TO YOUR LESSON

THINK OF THE “THRONE OF GAMES” AS A PACKET OF GUIDELINES TO GAMES

- ▶ These games are malleable as to suit your lessons needs.
- ▶ Example: Musical Envelopes
 - groups of roughly 4
 - Materials: one envelope containing vocab words for each group, speaker to play music.
 - Directions: Think charades. When the music is playing the students pass the envelope around the group. When the music stops, the student left with the envelopes must pick a word at random and act it out for the group. The others in the group must guess the word.
- ▶ I have used the Musical Envelopes format to make countless games.
 - ▶ I’ve put ice breaker questions in the envelopes for the first year students (if the envelopes lands on them they pick an ice breaker, read it out loud, and answer it. Then they ask the others in their group).
 - ▶ I’ve done a Pronunciation Envelopes game where the envelopes are filled with sentences that utilize words that are difficult to pronounce. The student that the envelope lands on reads a sentence to the group while the group writes what they hear. Then they compare the sentence they wrote to the one the student read from the envelope. The better the student’s pronunciation, the more correct the sentences.

TAILOR THE GAME TO FIT YOUR LESSON

- ▶ The main point is this: you can change these games all you want. I promise the ALT police isn't gonna come searching for you.
 - ▶ If you have a lesson that focuses on vocab, you can tailor a game to focus on vocab.
 - ▶ If you find a game in Throne of Games that you love, but it doesn't exactly fit with your lesson, try to tailor it to fit; tweak the rules, add different materials, etc.
- ▶ The best games are gonna be the ones you're excited about, and sometimes those are gonna have to be tailor made.

**FINAL
REMARKS!**

IN CONCLUSION

- ▶ Don't be afraid to make your own games, or tailor games to fit your needs.
 - ▶ Test them out on your JTEs or fellow ALTs if they have time to spare.
- ▶ Everyone has a horror story about a game or activity that just didn't work!
 - ▶ The blank stares, the feint whispers of confused Japanese children, the judgmental glances from your JTE...
 - ▶ DON'T WORRY! Life goes on. You learn a lot about your students every time something doesn't go exactly the way you had planned.
 - ▶ A failed game will only make your future games stronger!