

The use of games in the language classroom

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Abstract

This essay focuses on the use of games inside the classroom and it argues that games can be a good teaching method when teaching foreign languages. It looks at why games should be used as a teaching method and how in order to maximize the positive result on language learning. Also this essay explains various game categories and it gives an example of at least one game from each category which can be especially good in language teaching. In addition this essay looks at the four language skill areas: reading, writing, listening and speaking and it gives reasons for why games can be beneficial in the training of each one. Last but not least I created 3 new games that can be utilized inside the language classroom.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Almost everybody loves playing whether they are young or old. From early childhood playing is an enormous part of most children's lives and it plays a big part of their development as well. Children start playing as early as infancy but as they develop throughout their childhood they keep playing, and as they grow up and mature the nature of their play changes. When children enter middle childhood (6-12) their play starts to change into games which are different from play in the sense that they are more organized and planned, and they usually include a variation of rules and a specific objective (Rixon.1981.p. 3). When playing most games participants are almost forced into communicating with each other in order for the game to work. The need for communication during games, and the informal setting games provide encourages students to be unafraid to talk, which practices their fluency, a valuable communication skill. The national curriculum for foreign languages in Iceland emphasizes the importance of learning languages and especially the importance of communication. Because of this fact it is vitally important for teachers to create a positive learning environment, and to try to spark interest amongst their students both in the foreign language and culture because that is important to a successful language learning process. Games help achieve these goals as they help satisfy the requirement of the national curriculum that language learning should be enjoyable for students (Aðalnámsskrá Grunnskóla. Erlend mál.2007.p. 6).

2. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE OF GAMES

2.1 Games

2.1.1 Games as a teaching method

Teaching today has changed a lot over the past years. Once it was all about learners being passive and listening in the classroom, but today learners are usually much more active in the classroom, and what better way to be active than by playing games (Steve Sugar.1998.p. 3).

The national curriculum in foreign languages in Iceland talks about the importance of keeping teaching methods diverse in order to light and sustain interest amongst students. Teachers can help sustain diversity in a variety of ways, for example by using activities that require students to be creative in thinking and by emphasizing individual learning and cooperative learning equally. A more specific way that teachers can use in order to keep diversity within the classroom is to not be afraid of using games as a teaching method along with other methods. According to the national curriculum games can be a good teaching method and games, such as role playing games, imitation games, theatrical expression and problem solving activities are especially fitting for all stages of language learning (Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla. Erlend mál.2007.p. 12).

Howard Gardner, who theories that humans have eight intelligences, claims that when exploring a certain topic in school it can, and should, be approached in 6 different ways in order to maximize the chances of reaching all students in the classroom. One of these ways is “the personal way”, where the ultimate goal is to see if it is possible to approach a specific topic by using, for example, role play, or other interactions (Gardner.2006.p 142). In addition, Armstrong (2000) suggests board games as a teaching strategy that might suit students with interpersonal intelligence because they provide an excellent setting for interaction between students.

2.1.2 Why games?

There are a number of reasons that games deserve a place in the language classroom. First of all, they are fun, which is extremely important, because they can help activate students who may have been inactive before, due to lack of interest. Keeping students active is vital because teachers will never be able to actually teach students anything unless they can get them to participate in their own learning process.

Second, games also play a big part in helping participants build relationships, and to feel equal. Playing games in the classroom can also help create a friendly and positive atmosphere where seat arrangement can differ from game to game, and thus cause diversity from the norm which can be extremely helpful in keeping an exciting learning environment.

Third, the reason most people want to learn a language is to be able to use it in real situations, for example when travelling. Games can be a very good way to practice this skill because they can easily be used to reenact various situations from real life and provide students with practice in their fluency. Also, by using games in the classroom the teacher is giving his students a bigger role, and he himself is stepping out of the frontline which is a positive thing because it allows students to take on more responsibility. Also that allows students to do more on their own, and that can very well result in an increase in their confidence level. (Langran & Purcell.1994. p.12-14).

Fourth, language students need to be exposed to the language in a variety of situations, which is a need games can fulfill. Language students also need to be ready to take on the experience, keeping their minds open and being willing participants Again, games make this possible.

Fifth, language students need to be emotionally involved, meaning they need to feel something while they are exposed to the language. Strong emotions, such as happiness, excitement, amusement and suspense allow students to feel positively about their learning situation and are therefore likely to have a positive effect on language learning.

Sixth, games are good for shy students and students with low confidence, and that applies specifically when playing takes place in smaller groups because then they get a chance to speak in front of fewer audience instead of having to express themselves in front of the whole class. Also it is sometimes easier to open up and forget the shyness when playing a game because the atmosphere is not as serious and more emphasis is put on fluency rather than grammatical correctness. (Langran & Purcell.1994. p.12-14).

Seventh, games can be a good strategy when teaching various subjects because they are very likely to spark interest amongst students. They can be used with students of all ages, and when they are used with other teaching methods they create diversity which is ideal for school work (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1999.p. 80). A study that was undertaken in Iceland in 2006 shows clearly the need for diversity in schools. Many participants in that study complained

about the lack of diversity, and that they wanted more of it in order for their learning to become more fun and progressive in their school (Lovísa, Laufey & Samúel. 2006.p. 34).

Finally, using games in the classroom is important because many children do not get enough opportunity to play during their free time, which can be traced to the rapid changes in our society. Cities are getting bigger and traffic is getting heavier which means that more and more parents are hesitant to let their children play outside. Also passive activities such as watching television, or the computer screen are seen as being more exciting than actually physically playing, so today the sight of children playing various games in groups outside is becoming much more rare than it was 10, 15 or 20 years ago. This is not a good development, and it can have several bad consequences for our society. One possible consequence is that the lack of movement can cause health problems because even though not all games are physical some certainly are (Mashed.1989.p. 3). Another consequence this change might have is decreased social skills because, according to Piaget, children's games reflect society and that by playing games children learn many of society's rules and regulations (Cole, Cole & Lightfoot. 2005.p. 536).

2.1.3. How to use games

Even though games are usually started with the aim of having fun, they can sometimes end badly, for example if someone gets carried away with all the fun and says or does something that hurts someone else or his feelings. When games are used in the classroom the teacher must keep this in mind and control the game in the right way. Also he or she must make sure that every participant has a positive experience because the classroom must not become a place where students feel vulnerable or picked on in. Another thing that is important to acknowledge is the fact that not all games fit the classroom environment, or all groups of students, and that it can be hard finding the right game. In fact, it is good to keep in mind when selecting a game that a recipe for a good educational game is one that balances both fun and challenge (Steve Sugar.1998.p. xvi).

Another point teachers need to keep in mind is to choose wisely when it comes to selecting a game to use in the classroom because; although one game might be perfect for one teacher or a particular group of students it can be terrible for another teacher or group of students (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p.3). First of all, the teacher has to look at the group that will be participating in the game and he or she then has to set out a goal for the group which the game should aim towards (Alanna Jones. 1998.p. 14). Selecting an appropriate game for a

specific group of students who are working towards a specific goal can be tricky because, for example, they need to make sure that the game is relevant to the subject, that it fits their students' age and, teachers must remember not to select a game that is too complicated because that might result in a loss of interest amongst the students, or even defeat.

Also teachers must make sure they explain the rules of the game in detail and that all instructions are clear before starting the game. During the game it is important for the teachers to observe and be ready to help, but without unnecessarily interrupting the flow of the game because that might affect the fluency, which could result in discouraging students from participating. After the game, it is a good idea to have some sort of a follow up activity planned because it gives the student's time to reflect upon the game and how it turned out (Langran & Purcell.1994.p.15-19). It is important for teachers to know that augmenting a game is allowed and can certainly be necessary in some cases. More difficult games can be made easier so they become a challenge instead of too hard for less skilled or younger students and vice versa (Hadfield.1990.p v).

Although games can usually be modified to suit students of various ages, there are certain characteristics in games that appeal to children within specific age groups. For children age 6-8 repetition is very common in games, rules are often few, and the games usually do not take a very long time. When it comes to children age 9-11 they have patience for longer games, which often include much more suspense. Also when children reach this age they start to be able to augment the games themselves, for example to bend the rules to make the game more suited for their group. For children older than 12 games are often much more planned and they often emphasize teams and teamwork (Þórey Guðmundsdóttir.1987. p. 6).

2.2 Game categories

Games that are used in teaching can be divided into categories in many different ways. One way of dividing educational games is by categorizing them into groups depending on their model. Ingvar Sigurgeirsson (1995) has divided games into the following categories: games for dividing larger groups into smaller groups, introduction-games, group games, physical games, scavenger hunt games, educational games, theoretical expression games, drawing- and coloring games, educational card games, word games, story games and question games.

Another way of dividing educational games is by categorizing them into co-operative games and competitive games. Although competitive games can be a useful way to get some

students interested and to maintain their focus, co-operative games, which revolve around working together towards reaching a specific goal, can be an excellent way to foster the skill of working with others. In co-operative games the emphasis is not on winning or losing, and as a result nobody should have to suffer trauma to his or her self confidence which could lead to better results in the learning process (Mashedier.1989.p. 1). Educational games can be categorized in many other ways, for example dividing games into groups depending on which age group they fit could be convenient, also a division into writing-, reading-, speaking-, and listening games could be a good idea. Some games will always fit into many categories, which can make categorizing games a complex project.

2.2.1 Games for dividing larger groups into smaller groups

Within the group: games for dividing larger group into smaller groups, there are games that can be used prior to some group activity in order to divide the whole group into smaller groups. A great game that fits into this category is the game “Group dividing by miming” and it goes like this: The teacher has prepared notes with a certain role written on them. If the teacher wants to have 4 students in a group he has made 4 notes of each role, for example 4 notes that say “teacher” or “clown”. The second step is to give each student a note and remember to tell the students that they have to make sure that nobody besides them sees their note. Once everybody has gotten a note then they can begin acting out their roles and while they are doing so they must watch the others in order to figure out who is acting the same role as them. Once they have figured that out they will have created their groups (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 19). An activity like this can also be very good because it “breaks the ice” and prepares the students for the group work.

2.2.2 Introduction games

This category might include games like: “Searching for people” where students have to walk around the classroom and find students that have for example lived on a farm, been to Spain or eaten Mexican food and of course they would have to use the target language in order to get the necessary information. Also a good game in this category is the game “Stating the names” where students sit in a circle and one by one they introduce themselves, but the only catch is that before saying their own name they always have to repeat the names of the students who have already introduced themselves, and as the game progresses it gets harder and harder for students to memorize all the names (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 28-29). In order to make this game more fitting in a language classroom the teacher could ask the student to add something they like that starts with the same letter as their name, for example

“my name is Anna and I love apples”. Another idea could be to have students add adjectives with the same letter as their names, for example “Sigga super” or “Anna awesome” and that way it teaches adjectives as well. For kids whose names begin with special Icelandic letters, for example *Æsa*, *Ýr* or *Ðór*, the rules would have to be adjusted to some degree. A good idea could be to allow them to find adjectives that begin with the same letter as the second, or even third one in their name.

2.2.3 Group games

An example of a group game is the game “Fruit basket” which emphasizes listening, memory and reflexes, all of which are good and necessary skills to possess. The rules of this game are that participants sit in a circle and they all get a name of a certain fruit to “be”. One participant does not have a chair and has to stand in the middle. He then calls out a name of a fruit, for example an orange, and then all the students who are oranges have to stand up and switch seats. The one in the middle has to try and “steal” a seat while the others are switching and if he succeeds someone else will be left alone in the middle and gets the task of calling out the name of a new fruit (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson. 1995.p. 38). This game could easily be augmented to suit different situations or to train some other vocabulary just by using other categories of words, for example clothes, names of relatives, or different types of food instead of fruits.

2.2.4 Physical games

An example of a physical game is “Walking the line” where participants have to walk a line and perform various types of tasks at the same time, for example walking backwards, or balancing a book on their heads (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 71). In order to make this game more fitting in a language classroom the teacher should give the instructions in the target language, for example “everybody has to walk backwards”. Another example of a physical game could be the game “Simon says”, where someone plays Simon and gives the others orders, for example “Simon says jump” or “Simon says clap your hands”. I categorize this game as a physical game because of the fact that the Simon’s orders are usually physical.

Activities like “Simon says” fits into a teaching method called Total Physical Response (TPR) in which languages is taught by allowing students to observe and take their time to understand the language before having to speak it. TPR is thought to be a good teaching method for learning a foreign language for two reasons. The first one is that it is thought to reduce the stress level of learning a language and therefore making the learning more

enjoyable, and the second one is that it resembles the learning of children's native language, where children are exposed to the language for many months before starting to talk (Freeman. 2000. P. 107-111).

2.2.5 Scavenger hunt games

Savage hunt games are especially fitting in the language classroom because the clues can be written in the target language, which forces the participants to read and fellow team members to listen and test their understanding. Also within the scavenger hunt could be puzzles, which the students would have to solve, such as crossword puzzles, word searches and/or questions. The possibilities are almost endless and teachers are only bound by the limits of their own creativity.

2.2.6 Educational games

The "mail game" where participants have to deliver "mail" and make sure it gets to the right places works as an excellent example of an educational game. For languages a good idea would be to work around a theme of a certain place, such as the home. The first thing the teacher has to do is to make the envelopes and the "mail". The envelopes should be labeled with a specific genre, which in this example would be "kitchen", "bedroom", "bathroom" etc. The mail should then be letters with words on them that fit into specific envelopes, for example the word "knife" or the word "refrigerator" would match the envelope labeled "kitchen". Each student should then get a certain amount of "mail" that he has to write his name on and then get to work delivering. The first one to deliver all of his mail would win if it turned out he delivered correctly (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 113).

2.2.7 Theoretical expression games

The game "who am I?" fits perfectly into the theoretical expression category. In this game the class is usually divided into two teams and then one by one students stand in front of the whole class and act out a specific profession, which the teacher has given them. The teams take turns in guessing or asking questions, but the actor can only reply to questions by answering yes or no. The scoring can then be managed in a way that one point would be given to a team that asks a question, which is replayed with a yes answer and 5 points would be given to the team that figures out who the actor is playing (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 121).

2.2.8 Drawing- and coloring games

An example of a game from the category: drawing- and coloring games can be a game called "drawing in a foreign language". That game is very similar to the "who am I" game

from the category above but the only difference is that the students have to draw on the blackboard instead of acting, and they could be working with other types of vocabulary than professions, for example nouns, verbs or adjectives (Sunna Viðarsdóttir.1998).

2.2.9 Educational card games

One educational card game is Bingo (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 138), which is an excellent activity to use in language teaching because the teacher can draw words and the students only have pictures on their bingo cards or vice versa. That way the students have to understand the words to be able to match it to the right picture.

2.2.10 Word games

Word games can be especially good for language teaching. Included here are crossword puzzles and word searches where students get the words in their native tongue but they are hidden in the word search and only match the crossword puzzle in the target language. Also it is easy asking students to use the target language in the game “Filling in a chart” where participants have to find, for example a country, a city, an animal, or a type of food (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 160).

2.2.11 Story games

An excellent example of a game from the category: story games, is the game “to tell a story”. The participants sit in a circle and one of them gets the role of the story teller. The teacher whispers one word into the ear of each student and asks him or her to remember it. Then the storyteller begins telling a story and every now and then he stops and points at a student who then has to say the word the teacher has whispered to him. The storyteller then has to incorporate this word into the story, and that usually has amusing consequences (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 179). This game fits into language teaching perfectly because the story would be told in the target language and the words would also be in the target language.

2.2.12 Question games

A good game in the category: question games, is the game “riddles about European countries”. The students get divided into pairs and each pair gets assigned a specific country and the task of preparing a small riddle about it, such as

“It has many horses,
it is surrounded by sea,
and there you cannot travel by train”

After each pair has made their riddle they would be asked to come to the front of the class and ask the other pairs to solve the riddle. The other pairs then have to write down what they think the right answer is and when all pairs have asked their riddles all the answers are collected and the pair with the most correct answers wins (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 188).

2.3 Games and the four areas

2.3.1 Writing

Writing is a skill that, even in the native language, is learnt and not acquired. That fact could explain in part why writing is often considered to be difficult, or even boring in the target language. Another explanation could be that it is often assigned as homework, and many students don't like homework. One possible reason why writing can be viewed as being difficult is because the writer does not get an immediate feedback similar to what happens during conversations, and as a result the writer could feel more insecure about his work. Some teachers also unwisely use writing as punishment: "Ok, just for that Bobby, I want to see an essay on my desk tomorrow on the dangers of smoking!" Writing also demands a completely different language than normally used in conversations. For students in school this must not become their experience of writing because that can lead to their loathing of writing. Games can be a good way to prevent this because not only are games fun but they can provide writers with a reason to write and it is obvious that writing will become easier when there is a clear reason instead of just having to write because the teacher said so. Another thing that games can provide for writers is an audience. In many games other students will play the reader's part and therefore provide the writer with the necessary feedback that writing often lacks (Hadfield & Hadfield.1990. p. v-vi). A variety of interactive writing games can be found on the internet and teachers can, without much effort, create a game that practices writing. For example, when teaching students how to write a formal letter a game where participants would have to rearrange sentences to position them correctly, so they make a formal letter, could be a good game.

2.3.2 Listening

Most people remember training their listening skill mainly by doing listening activities when they were in school. Listening activities might very well be an effective way of training that particular skill but teachers need to remember to keep the activities versatile or their students might get bored. By combining listening with games, teachers might prevent their

students from getting bored, and by keeping them interested they are increasing the chances of the students achieving their goals. An example of a good listening game is the famous game “Simon says” where one participant plays the role of Simon and gives the others directions, for example by saying:”Simon says jump”, or “Simon says stop jumping” and then everybody would have to do that. If Simon only says “everybody jump” and does not attach the phrase “Simon says” at the front then the other participants are not be supposed to follow the direction. Because of this, students need to listen carefully in order to know when to follow Simon’s directions and when to ignore them. This game can also be used to train any vocabulary.

2.3.3 Speaking

According to the national curriculum, teaching communication is very important because of the fact that it plays such a big part of knowing a language. The curriculum also claims that since communication is unpredictable in real life, students must get the chance to practice exactly that and not just to read premade conversations. In order to achieve this, the curriculum suggests games as a good method (Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla. Erlend mál. 2007.p. 8). Even though the importance of teaching communication is stressed in the national curriculum, some teachers seem to be lacking when it comes to actually teaching students to communicate. According to a study made on English teaching in elementary schools in Iceland in 2006 only 10% of English teachers, who teach 9th and 10th grade, always use the target language in the classroom, 66% of them use it often or sometimes, and 24% seldom uses it in the classroom. The same study showed that students did not use English much either. In fact 39% of students said they seldom answered their teacher in English and an astonishing 75% of students said they did not use the target language to communicate with their fellow students (Lovísa, Laufey & Samúel. 2006. p. 27). Students look up to their teachers and when they do not use the target language inside the language classroom it should not come as a surprise that many students do not use it either. Games could be helpful in solving this problem because they call for communication, and they emphasize fluency instead of accuracy, which should encourage students to communicate because when the emphasis is on fluency students usually do not receive much criticism although they might make errors. Fluency is an important skill to practice because it is what is needed in the real world, and in that sense it could be said that games provide a necessary connection between the classroom and the real world (Hadfield.1990.p. v). Although games in general might emphasize fluency the category speaking games can be divided into two main categories.

Those categories are: linguistic games and communicative games. Even though they both aim towards teaching speech in the target language they put emphasis on very different things. While linguistic games emphasize speaking correctly the goal when playing communicative games is fluency (Hadfield. 1999. p. 8).

2.3.4 Reading

Reading is an important skill to possess especially when learning the English language. First of all it is important because of the fact that to be able to write people need to know how to read. Secondly it is important for people if they plan to visit the country where the language is spoken because then they will have to be able to read, for example, various directions, menus, and tourist brochures. Thirdly, knowing how to read is important if students are planning on getting an education beyond elementary school because that requires reading (Jeremy Harmer. 2009.p. 77). This last point applies especially in Iceland where the majority of textbooks for university are in English. Because of how important the skill reading is it is crucial that teachers seek appropriate means in order to keep students interested. As with the other skills, games can provide diversity and help keep subjects fun and interesting.

3. NEW GAMES

3.1 How these games fill a need gap

Although there are many books and websites that contain hundreds or even thousands of game ideas there is always room for more and especially if it is linked directly to a specific subject and if the games objectives, preferred age group, duration and preparation are described in detail. Traditionally, games have been used in teaching as an activity to use as a reward or as a fun activity to do at the end of the day or week. However, since I believe I have argued that games can, and should be used for more educational purposes than just to have fun I wanted to create games that could be used in that specific way.

Since the national curriculum for foreign languages in Iceland states that all language skills, including reading, writing, listening and speaking, should be emphasized in teaching and assessment (Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla. Erlend mál.2007.p 13), I decided to categorize my games based on the language skill they train.

3.2 A board game / a reading and listening game

I got the idea for this game from the “Filling in a chart” game where participants have to fill in a chart with names of countries, animals, foods and city’s that begin with certain letters from the alphabet (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson.1995.p. 160). I augmented this game and made it into a board game where each square has a certain letter on it and every time a player lands on a specific square the player sitting to his or her right has to draw a card with that same letter on it, and read it out loud, asking him or her the question written on the card.

Objective/s: The main objective of this game is twofold. First of all it is to get students to practice their reading skill by reading out loud a short text and asking another player a question. Secondly it is to get students to practice their listening, because they have to listen carefully in order to be able to answer the question correctly. Another skill this game trains, and could be referred to as a minor objective, is memory and thinking.

Time: It is necessary to assume this game will take a whole lesson, but the time depends on how many participants are in each group.

Age: This particular reading text would be appropriate in lower secondary level, but this game idea can be augmented to suit younger students

Preparation: In order to insure that each student gets several turns in the game, and with that maximizing his or her chance to practice reading and listening, it would be best if the teacher divided the students into groups, having each group play the game separately and by making sure that each group does not contain more than 6 players.

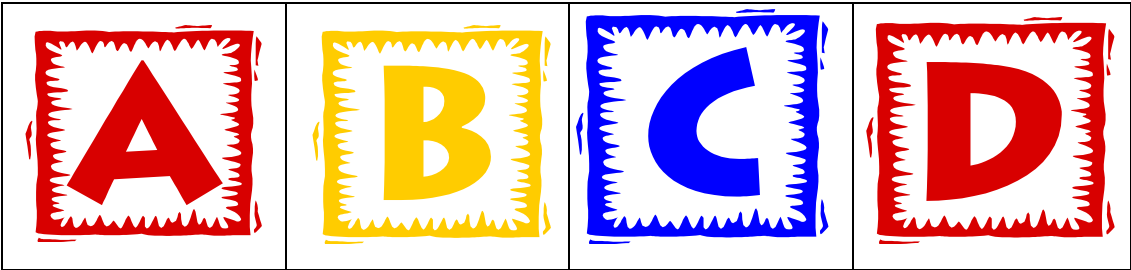
How to play: Player A throws the dice and moves his piece. If he lands on a square with a letter on it then the player sitting on his right hand draws a card with the same letter on and asks him the question from that card. If the player is unable to answer the question correctly then he has to go back to the square he came from, but if he answers correctly he gets to stay on that square. Each player only gets to throw the dice once during each round. Other squares in the game have directions on them, such as “throw the dice again” or “wait here one round”, which need to be followed in the event someone lands on them. To finish the game players have to actually land on the finish square. Players are not allowed to pass the finish square so in the event they throw the dice and the number that comes up exceeds the number of squares until the finish then they will be forced to move backwards. The player who is the first one to manage to land on the finish square wins the game.

The rest of the cards for this game can be found in the appendix but on the next 2 pages can be seen an example of how the cards and board may look





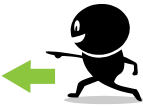



An example of the inside of the cards:

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>An example of a type of food that starts with an A is Apples. Can you think of another type of food that starts with an A? <i>Asparagus, Almonds</i></p> | <p>Do you like sports? What is your favorite one? Basketball starts with a B. Can you think of others who start with B? <i>Boxing, Bowling</i></p> | <p>Many delicious types of food start with the letter C, for example chocolate. Can you name another one? <i>Carrots, Chicken</i></p> | <p>I consider many foods to be divine, for example Dip. Can you name two types of food that start with the letter D? <i>Doughnuts, Dressing</i></p> |
|---|--|---|---|

The outside of the cards will look like this



The board:

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Start | A | B | C | D |
| E |  Take one step forward | F | G |  Throw the dice again |
| H | I | J | K | L |
| M |  Throw the dice again | N | O |  Wait one round |
| P | R |  Take one step back | S | T |
|  Go up | V |  Wait one round | W |  Finish |

3.3 Writing game / Vocabulary game

Objective: The main objectives of this game, besides having fun, is to teach students to work in teams, to increase their vocabulary, and because they have to write down the words they will also receive practice in their spelling.

Time: The game can range from 10 minutes to a whole lesson, depending on how many rounds the teacher decides to play. It is probably not ideal to only play for only 10 minutes because it takes time before starting to prepare the group work and it might be too much to rotate seating or even the desk arrangement in the classroom, and getting all the students to their groups for a game that only takes 10 minutes.

Age: Any age, depending on the words used.

Preparation: The teacher must decide which words he will use and how many minutes the groups will get to think of related words. Also the teacher must decide how to divide the class into groups and how many rounds he or she is going to have the students play.

How to play: Students are divided into groups and they get a piece of paper and decide who should be the writer of the group. When all groups are ready the teacher writes a certain word on the blackboard, for example the word *weather*. Then the students are supposed to work together in their groups to come up with as many words as possible that are related to the word *weather*, for example: *rainy, sunny, cloudy, wet, dry, hot, and cold*. The students must keep their voices down because they cannot let the other groups hear their ideas because the groups are competing with each other. The teacher must make sure they have a time limit, for example 3 minutes, and once the time is up he or she walks around and collects the papers from the groups. Then the teacher counts the words and the groups get as many points as the words that they thought of, for example if one group found 7 related words they would get 7 points. This can then be repeated with a different word. Before beginning the teacher has to decide for himself how many rounds he wants to have his students play, and at the end the score is counted and the team with the most points wins.

Variation: The teacher can add spelling into the game by announcing that correctly spelled words give an extra point.

So that not too much time is spent waiting for the teacher to tally up points (boring and not very educational), you could have groups make posters, which get taped up for everyone to see and to learn from.

3.4 A mini scavenger hunt

I decided to make a savage hunt because I believe it can be an excellent method to utilize when teaching foreign languages. I believe that because when making a savage hunt the possibilities are almost endless. I also loved playing it when I was younger and now I am convinced that the majority of students would like it too. I see this savage hunt being used to have fun with a certain type of vocabulary after having learnt it. This in particular is built around animal vocabulary but could easily be changed to suit other vocabularies.

Objective: The objectives for this particular savage hunt are: to practice team work, to read in the target language, to increase vocabulary and to solve puzzles and clues.

Preparation: The teacher needs to arrange all the clues at each station before the students enter the classroom. After the students have arrived he needs to divide them into teams, and for this particular savage hunt each team cannot exceed 5 players and there is not room for more than 5 teams in the game.

Age: This particular savage hunt would suit students in upper elementary- or lower secondary level best.

How to play: Each team is named after a certain color and at each station there are envelopes, one for each team. Each envelope is labeled with the color of a team. Within each envelope there are instructions for what the team has to do in order to find the next envelope and once they do they will have to solve some other assignment in order to get the next one. In order to finish teams must find all the envelopes and finish all the assignments. The team that is first to complete everything wins. Finishing everything does not include reading out the story to the rest of the class. That is just a fun activity to sum up this activity with.

Station 1:

- **Letter one (read-, green-, blue-, yellow-, and purple team):**

Dear students!

The first thing you need to do is find a book that's the same color as your team which has been hidden somewhere inside this classroom. Once you find it you will receive directions on what to do next.

Here on the first station the only difference is the fact that the teams need to find different colored books. Having the teams performing activities that are practically the same, except for details like the color of the book, allows us to keep the game inside a smaller area than otherwise.

Station 2: (which is where the red-, yellow-, blue-, green-, or purple books are).

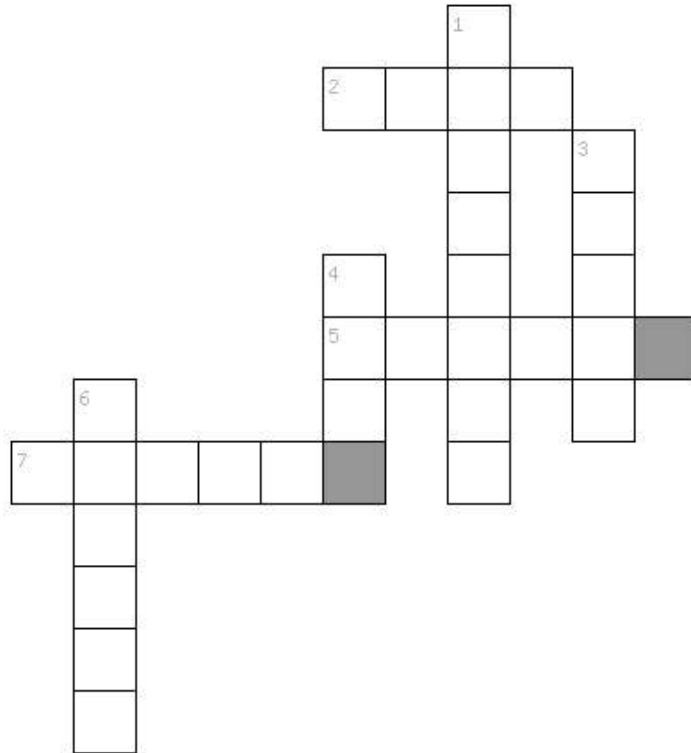
- **Letter two (read-, blue-, green-, yellow-, and purple team):**

Great job! You have successfully found the correct book. Now you have to flip through the pages of this book because somewhere inside it a piece of paper has been hidden, which contains an interesting crossword puzzle that you need to solve. Once you have solved the crossword puzzle you need to take the first letter from each word and rearrange the letters to figure out the mystery word, which will tell you where to go next.

Mystery word: _ _ _ _ _ i n _ _ _

The crossword puzzle is at the next page and the solution to the crossword puzzle can be seen in the appendix:

CROSSWORD



Down

1.



6.



3.



4.



Across

2.



5.



7.



Station 3 (in the window):

- **Third letter (read-, blue-, green-, yellow-, and purple team)**

Now you need to solve a little word search. Once you have finished it, you should take it to your teacher and she will hand you the next clue. Please note that even though you see the words in Icelandic below, they are written in English inside the box.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F | R | O | G | A | S | J | V | R | E | H | I |
| A | H | F | J | H | D | H | I | E | O | X | T |
| D | I | I | T | B | Y | G | S | N | K | L | N |
| X | I | S | V | Y | O | A | N | E | T | S | I |
| B | A | H | J | R | I | K | A | Q | M | R | E |
| Z | R | F | I | W | K | J | K | F | E | K | F |
| E | R | L | V | P | E | G | E | S | Y | A | F |
| R | L | Z | F | L | O | R | N | N | R | M | A |
| A | X | V | B | D | O | I | S | N | O | Z | R |
| Y | K | K | H | P | O | S | T | U | G | N | I |
| J | L | G | H | L | Y | G | S | R | J | X | G |
| E | W | N | O | I | L | E | O | C | S | Q | Q |

Froskur

Gíraffi

Górilla

Hundur

Snákur

Mús

Fiskur

Ljón

The solution to the word search can be found in the appendix.

You are absolutely correct to use the word animal for all multi-cell life forms that sexually reproduce and digest food, meaning that technically ants and fish are animals. However, in everyday use we normally differentiate among animals, insects, amphibians and fish. Therefore it might be best to substitute the word creature for animal where you mean “all animals”. But this is up to you. As I say, you are not wrong.

Station 4 (at the teacher’s desk):

- **Fourth letter (red-, blue-, green-, yellow-, and purple team)**

Nice work! The next thing you have to do is help all the animals below get to where they want to go. Once you have finished that you will receive your next clue from your teacher

1. Make a red path from the Swordfish to the kitten.
2. Make a yellow path from the kitten to the alligator.
3. Make a blue path from the rooster to the alligator
4. Make a green path from the pig to the turtle.
5. Make a purple path from the frog to the hen
6. Make an orange path from the koala to the kangaroo
7. Make a pink path from the cow to the sheep
8. Make a black path from the turtle to rooster

The maze is on the next page:

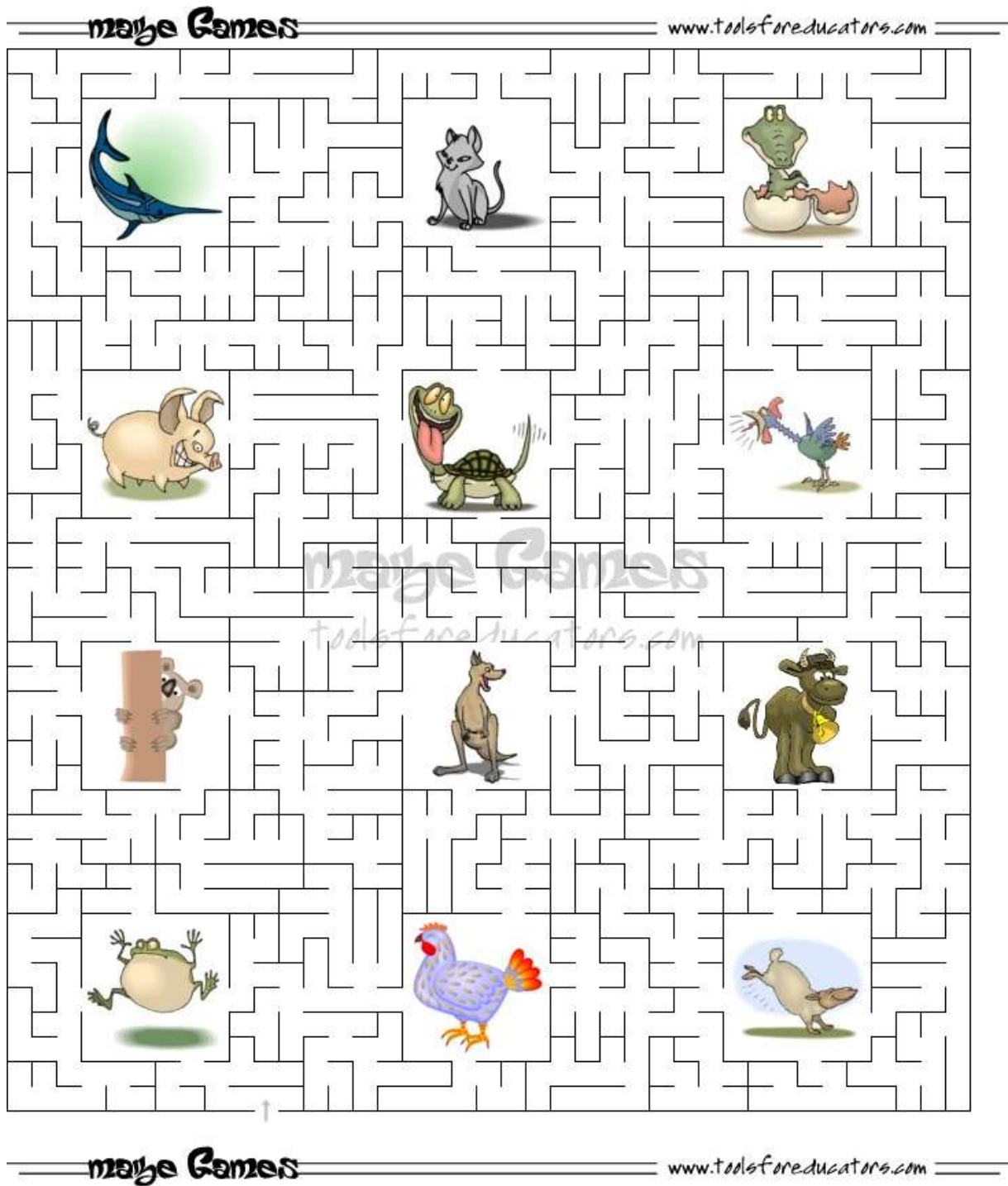
Station 4 (at the teacher’s desk)

- **Fifth letter (red-, blue-, green-, yellow-, and purple team)**

Congratulations! Now you are almost at the finish line. All you have to do is search the classroom for your prize. The team that is the first to find the prize gets to keep it. One clue: the prize is something

you can eat, and it is healthy.

Here I would have Skeyr.is or something similar as the prize, but that is of course the teacher's decision.



CONCLUSION

Based on all of the information above it seems clear that games can and should be used as a teaching method when teaching languages. One reason why games could work well as a teaching method is because of the change that has occurred in teaching, where students have been becoming much more active in the whole learning process. Besides giving students a chance to be more active, games usually place the teacher in a background role, and therefore allow the students to take on more responsibility. It has also been made clear that games help create diversity and that can be very helpful in sustaining interest amongst students in the school. We have also learned that by creating diversity teachers are reaching out to a broader group of students and that is very important because students are individuals that differ from each other in so many ways. In addition we have discussed Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and seen results from a study made in Reykjavík in 2006 that along with the national curriculum of foreign languages in Iceland all confirm the need for diversity in teaching methods, and the first two even recommend the use of games in the language classroom.

Besides creating necessary diversity in the classroom and being a good method for teaching, we must not forget that games are fun and that helps get students active in their learning. I think we can all agree on the fact that no matter what teaching method is being used learning does not take place without the student participating in the learning process. Aside from activating learners and creating diversity, games also create a comfortable and friendly atmosphere inside the classroom where students, especially shy students, might feel more comfortable in expressing themselves in the target language. Also games help students to get to know each other better, because many of them require more student interaction than other teaching methods might. Games can also be used to help recreate various situations from real life and therefore make the learning more real and give the students a sense of what they are doing is relevant. Another benefit to using games in the classroom is that children do mature through games and through playing games they learn many of society's rules and regulations. In addition when using physical games, children would get a change to get a necessary work out that is often lacking today, due to rapid change in our society.

We have discovered that although games are supposed to be fun and easy there are certain things teachers need to keep in mind when using them inside the classroom. First of all the teacher needs to do everything in his or her power to make sure that all students have a

good experience from playing the game. Also the teacher needs to keep in mind that not all games fit certain students and some cannot be played inside the classroom. When selecting a game teachers need to ask themselves, “What are the goals am I trying to achieve by playing this game?” and they have to make sure that the game they choose is not too easy but at the same time not too difficult. If teachers believe a certain game might be too difficult for their students they need to be aware that they need to augment the game to make it more fitting. Finally, teachers need to make sure they explain all rules in detail, that during the game they do not interrupt the flow of the game and to plan some sort of a follow-up activity after the game.

I have discussed game categories and the complications that might follow categorizing games. Also we got to know one specific categorizing made by Ingvar Sigurgeirsson (1995), where he divided games into the following categories: games for dividing larger groups into smaller groups, introduction-games, group games, physical games, savage hunt games, educational games, theoretical expression games, drawing- and coloring games, educational card games, word games, story games and question games. I took examples from almost every group and discussed how that particular game might be utilized in language teaching.

Also I have discussed the use of games in the four language skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking, and there were many valid reasons why using games might help train each specific skill. Writing games for example, help provide important immediate feedback that is usually lacking when students train their writing skills in a more traditional way. Listening games could offer an important and more exciting alternative from the boring listening activities that some of us remember from school. Games could make reading more fun and provide students with a reason to read, which is important because of how essential the reading skill is. For example people need to know how to read in order to be able to learn how to write. When it came to speaking games were able to serve the very important job of helping students train their fluency.

Last but not least I have created 3 new games that I believe can be very beneficial in language teaching. I have linked them to what specific skill they practice and described them in detail, for example: their goals, which age group of students they suit, the necessary preparation and how long the game takes. I certainly intend to use them in my teaching in the future and I hope that someday they will be useful in other language classrooms too.

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APPENDIX

Each card will have a picture of a certain letter on one side of it and one of the following texts at the other side.

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>An example of a type of food that starts with an A is Apples. Can you think of another type of food that starts with an A?</p> <p><i>Asparagus, Almonds</i></p> | <p>The anaconda is a dangerous animal, but can you think of another creature that begins with the letter A?</p> <p><i>Ant, Ape, Armadillo</i></p> | <p>There are many countries that start with the letter A, for example Andorra. The question is: can you think of any?</p> <p><i>Argentina, Australia</i></p> | <p>There are not many sports that start with this letter but if you think really hard you should be able to think of some.</p> <p><i>Archery, Aerobics</i></p> |
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| <p>Bananas or Bacon are great examples of food that begin with a B. Can you name another type of food beginning with this letter?</p> <p><i>Bread, Beef, Beans</i></p> | <p>Do you like sports? What is your favorite one? Basketball starts with a B but can you think of others that start with B?</p> <p><i>Boxing, Bowling</i></p> | <p>B is a beautiful letter. Birds and Bees start with a B but are there any other creatures you can think of that do too?</p> <p><i>Bear, Bat, Beetle, Bull</i></p> | <p>Bahamas and Barbados are islands that both start with a B. Can you name another country that begins with a B?</p> <p><i>Britain, Belgium, Brazil</i></p> |
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| <p>There are not many sports that start with the letter C. But do you think you can name one?</p> <p><i>Curling, Canoeing</i></p> | <p>Many delicious types of food start with the letter C, for example chocolate. Can you name another one?</p> <p><i>Carrots, Chicken</i></p> | <p>The world's largest country, with a population of over 1.3 billion people, China begins with the letter C. Can you name another?</p> <p><i>Canada, Croatia, Chile</i></p> | <p>A cat is an animal that begins with the letter C but what other animals begin with this letter?</p> <p><i>Camel, Chicken, Cow</i></p> |
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| <p>Dogs begin with the letter D and most of them are also very cute but do you know about another animal that starts with a D?</p> <p><i>Dear, Dolphin, Duck</i></p> | <p>There are not many countries that start with the letter D, but one is really close to us. Do you know its name?</p> <p><i>Denmark</i></p> | <p>Can you think of any sports that begin with the letter D?</p> <p><i>Dodge ball, Diving, Darts, Dancing</i></p> | <p>Many foods are divine, for example Dip. Can you name two types of food that start with the letter D?</p> <p><i>Doughnuts, Dressing</i></p> |
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| Can you think of a town or a city, anywhere in the world, that starts with the letter E? | England is known for football and teams like Everton start with an E. Can you think of other countries that start with this letter? | Some people would consider the Easter bunny to be a real animal, but can you name any other animal that starts with the letter E? | Who has tasted eel? Can you please suggest some other type of food that starts with an E? |
| <i>Eigilstaðir, Edinburgh</i> | <i>Egypt, Estonia</i> | <i>Eagle, Elephant</i> | <i>Egg, enchilada</i> |

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| F is a fun letter. I think many creatures begin with the letter F. What do you think? Can you name any? | The word food begins with an F, but are there any specific types of food that begin with this letter? | Can you think of any sport that begins with the letter F? | The countries of the world are very many and chances are one of them begins with an F. Can you name one? |
| <i>Fish, Fly, Fox, Frog</i> | <i>Fish, Fruit, Fries, Fajitas</i> | <i>Football, Fencing</i> | <i>Finland, France, Fiji</i> |

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| Iceland is mostly green but Greenland is mostly white. Can you think of another country that starts with the letter G? | One sport starts with the letter G. It's a quiet sport and many rich people play it. Can you think of it? | Some babies eat Gerber baby food and some adults eat Geese. Can you think of another type of food that starts with a G? | Many animals begin with the letter G for example one very big and one very small and one with a LONG neck. Can you remember any? |
| <i>Greece, Germany</i> | <i>Golf</i> | <i>Grapes, Gingerbread</i> | <i>Gorilla, Goldfish, Goat</i> |

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| Chances are you have had a hamster sometime. But do you know about other creatures that begin with the letter H? | You can hop on an airplane and travel the world. But what countries can you visit that begin with the letter H? | When selecting a sport that you want to play maybe you should consider looking at sports that start with a H. Can you name one? | What is your favorite food? Is it a hamburger? Can you name another food that starts with the letter H? |
| <i>Hippo, Horse, Horsefly.</i> | <i>Haiti, Hungary, Holland</i> | <i>Hockey, Horseriding</i> | <i>Ham, Hot dogs, Heart</i> |

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| "I" is the letter for Iceland but are there any other countries that begin with this same letter? | Some sports, such as golf or skiing are played outside and some are played?? What word starting with the letter "I" is missing? | Do you love Ice cream? Can you think of another type of food that starts with the letter I? | Another word for bugs that starts with an I is????? Or if you prefer to name some other creature that starts with an I, you can. |
| <i>Ireland, Israel, Italy</i> | <i>Inside</i> | <i>Iceberg, Ice tea,</i> | <i>Insects, Iguana</i> |

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| A baby Kangaroo is called a Joey. Can you think of another type of animal that starts with the letter J? | Think really hard and try to figure out a type of sport that starts with the letter J! | There are not many countries that begin with the letter J, but can you name one? | A very spicy topping on a pizza starts with the letter J. Do you know what it is or can you name something else that starts with a J? |
| <i>Jaguar, Jellyfish</i> | <i>Judo, Jump rope</i> | <i>Japan, Jamaica, Jordan</i> | <i>Jalapeno, Jam, Juice</i> |

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| Kidney beans might not be your favorite food but they start with the letter K. Can you think of other types of food starting with a K? | Soak your head and try and remember any countries that begin with the letter K! | Kiwi is not just a fruit, it is also a bird from New Zealand, but can you think of other animals that begin with the letter K? | Finding a sport that begins with the letter K could be difficult, but can you try? |
| <i>Ketchup, Kiwi, Kit kat</i> | <i>Korea, Kenya, Kuwait</i> | <i>Koala, Kangaroo</i> | <i>Karate, Kickboxing</i> |

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| Food from the day before is usually called leftovers, but can you name some type of food that starts with the letter L? | London is the capital of England, but can you name any countries that start with the letter L? | Can you name a city in America that begins with the letter L? | Lice are not dangerous but they are annoying. Can you name other creatures that begin with L? |
| <i>Lobster, Lemons, Lamb</i> | <i>Luxembourg, Latvia</i> | <i>Los Angeles, Las Vegas</i> | <i>Lion, Lizard, Labrador</i> |

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| Some mothers bake muffins on the weekend. Can you name other types of food that start with an M? | Did you know there is a country called Marshall Islands in the Pacific ocean? Can you name other countries that start with an M? | You might find it strange that there is a snake in the USA called Milk snake. Can you think of other animals that begin with an M? | Can you name some type of sport that begins with the letter M? |
| <i>Melon, Meat, Milk</i> | <i>Malta, Mexico</i> | <i>Mouse, Monkey, Mule</i> | <i>Martial art, Motocross</i> |

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| People need nourishment but what type of food is out there that begins with the letter N? | It is nice travelling to foreign countries, but what countries can you go to that begin with the letter N? | Nothing keeps you healthier than being active and playing sports, but what sports begin with the letter N? | The night crawler is the name of a worm. Can you think of another animal that starts with the letter n? |
| <i>Noodles, Nachos, Nuts</i> | <i>Netherlands, Norway</i> | <i>Netball, Nascar</i> | <i>Needle fish Nightingale</i> |

| | | | |
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| <p>Since Oman is the only country that starts with the letter O then name a city that begins with an O!</p> <p><i>Orlando, Oklahoma</i></p> | <p>Oil can be used in cars and when preparing food. Do you know what other types of food start with the letter O?</p> <p><i>Orange, Olives, Onion</i></p> | <p>Did you know that Oropendola is the name of a bird? Probably not, but do you know any other animals that begin with an O?</p> <p><i>Owl, Ostrich, Otter</i></p> | <p>There may not be any sports that begin with O, but do you know the name of an athletic competition that starts with an O?</p> <p><i>Olympics</i></p> |
|--|--|---|--|

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Many kids love pizza and a possible toppings is pepperoni. Can you think of another food that starts with the letter P?</p> <p><i>Pickles, Potatoes, Peas</i></p> | <p>A nice place to vacation could be Portugal, but can you think of another country that starts with the letter P?</p> <p><i>Poland, Pakistan, Peru</i></p> | <p>Paris is the capital of France, with a population of more than 2 million people. Can you name other cities that start with a P?</p> <p><i>Portland, Petersburg</i></p> | <p>Polar bears have been seen in Iceland but probably not in Spain, but what other animals begin with the letter P?</p> <p><i>Panda, Parrot, Puffin</i></p> |
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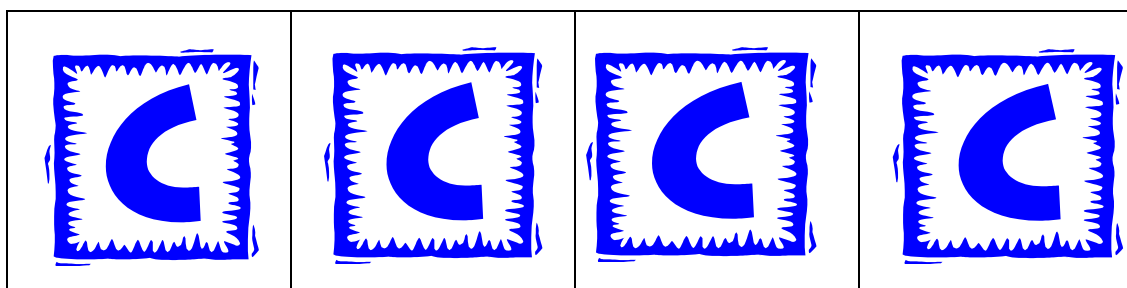
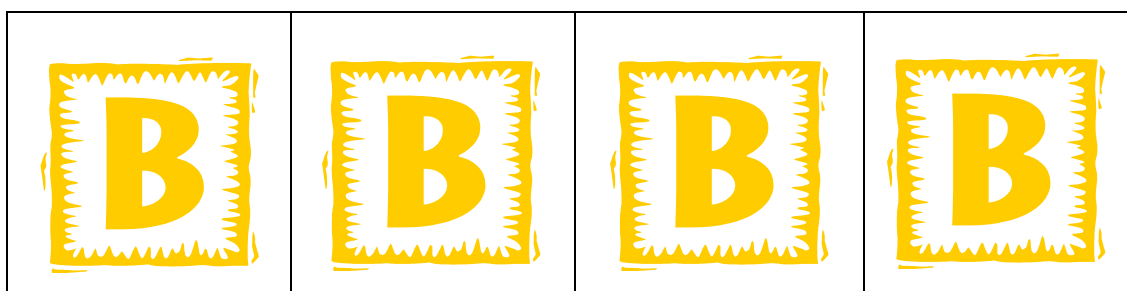
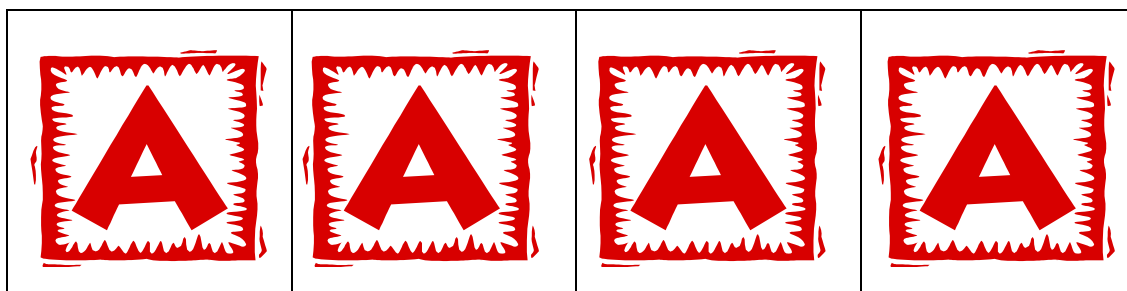
| | | | |
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| <p>Raisins are delicious. Can you think of another type of food that starts with the letter R?</p> <p><i>Roast beef, Rice, Ribs</i></p> | <p>Unlike with many other letters there actually are a few types of sport that begin with an R. Can you name one of them?</p> <p><i>Rugby, Racing, Rowing</i></p> | <p>A Rottweiler is one type of a dog and it also begins with the letter R. Can you name other animals that begin with this same letter?</p> <p><i>Rooster, Rat, Rhino</i></p> | <p>Reykjavík is the capital of Iceland and begins with an R, but can you think of any countries that begin with this letter?</p> <p><i>Russia, Rwanda</i></p> |
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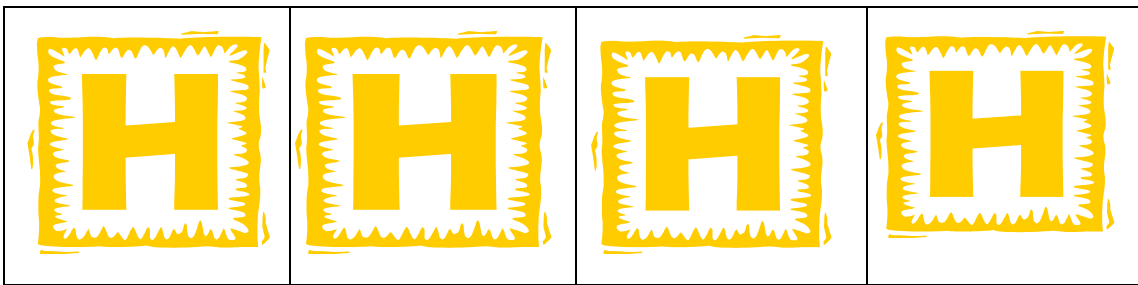
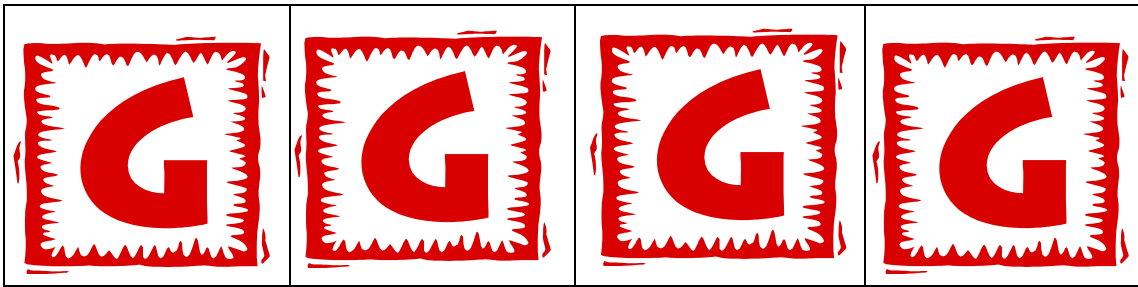
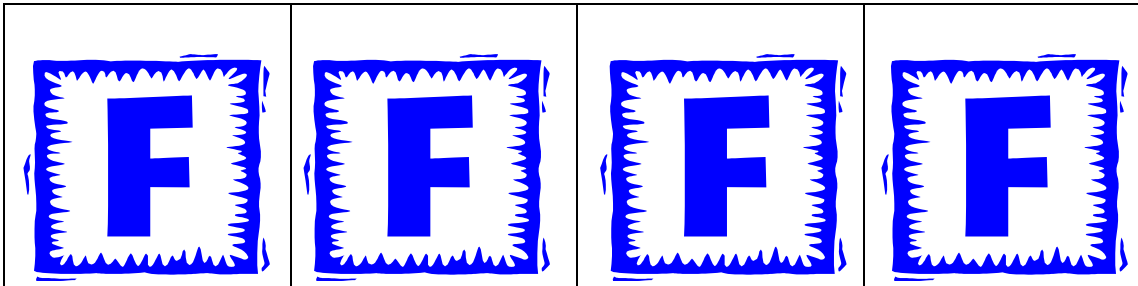
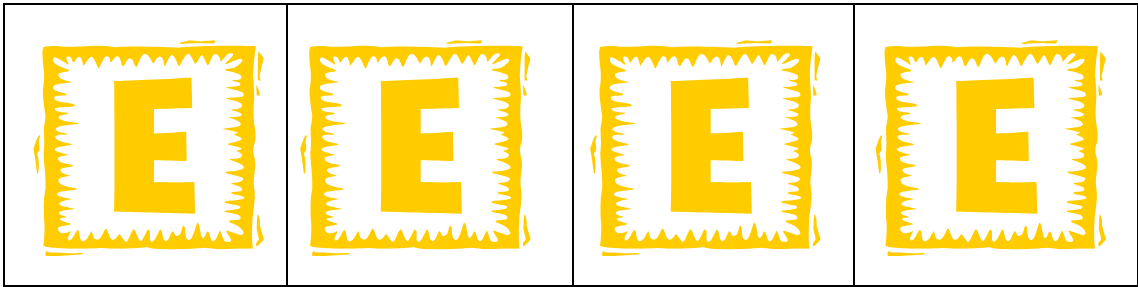
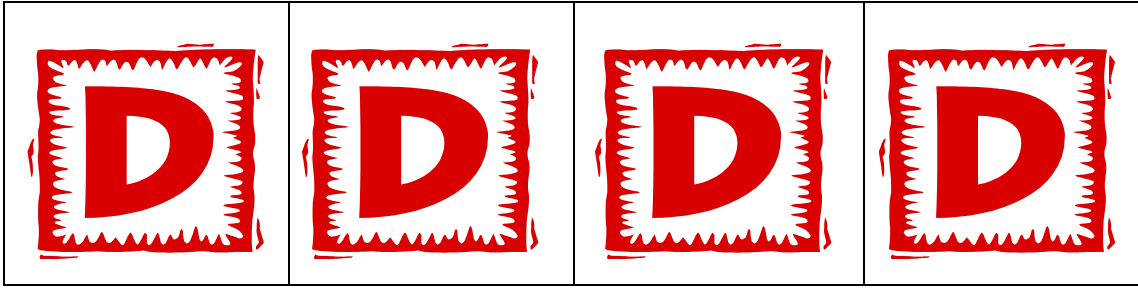
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| <p>Singapore begins with S, but what other countries begin with the letter S?</p> <p><i>Slovakia, Serbia, Spain</i></p> | <p>The word sport begins with the letter S. Can you name any specific types of sports that begin with that letter?</p> <p><i>Soccer, Swimming,</i></p> | <p>Some people like to eat snails, specially the French people. Can you name other types of creatures that begin with the letter s?</p> <p><i>Sheep, Spider, Snake</i></p> | <p>It's no surprise many people like sandwiches because there are all kinds available, but what other food begin with an S?</p> <p><i>Soup, Sugar, Sushi</i></p> |
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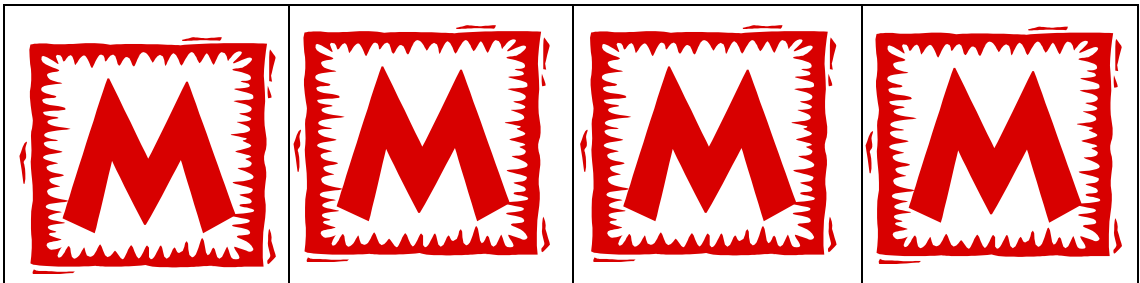
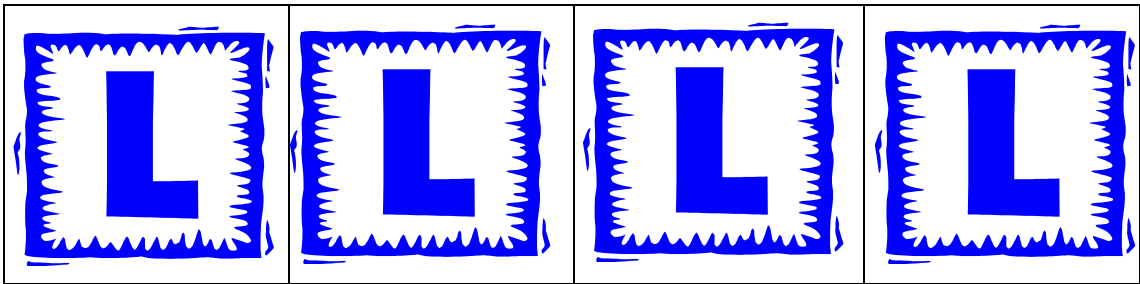
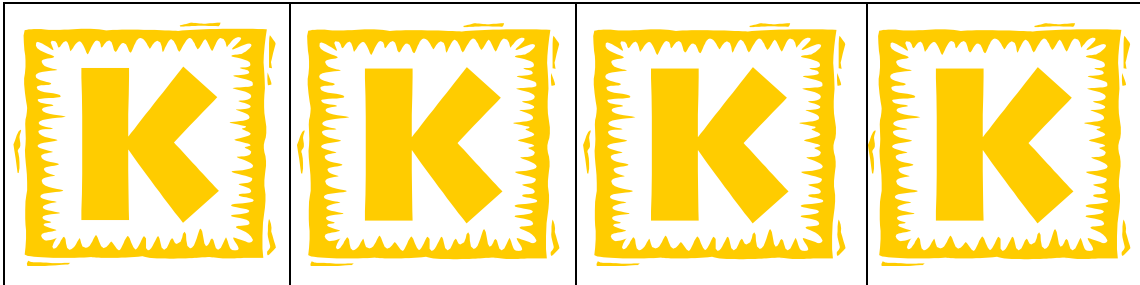
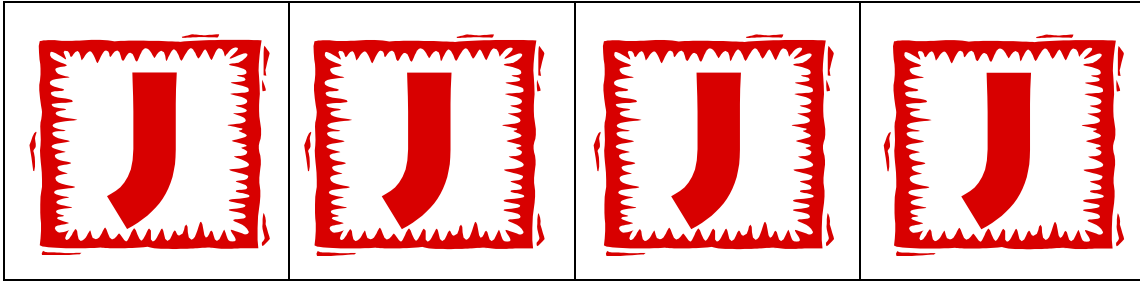
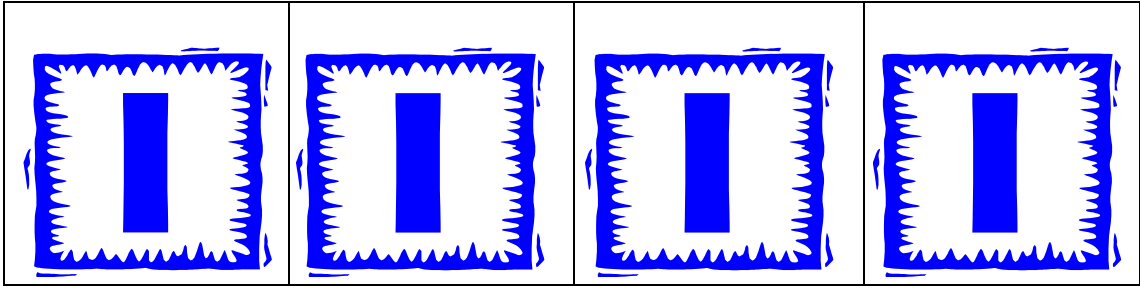
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| <p>Tiramisu is a delicious desert. What other types of food can you think of that begin with the letter t?</p> <p><i>Tomato, Turkey, Tuna</i></p> | <p>Have you travelled to a country that begins with T? Or can you at least name any?</p> <p><i>Taiwan, Turkey, Tibet</i></p> | <p>Did you know that the Tasmanian Devil is a shy animal? Can you name other animals that begin with the letter T?</p> <p><i>Tiger, Tarantula, Turtle</i></p> | <p>Did you know that Tractor Pull is considered a sport? Can you name another sport that begins with a T?</p> <p><i>Tennis, Tae Kwon Do</i></p> |
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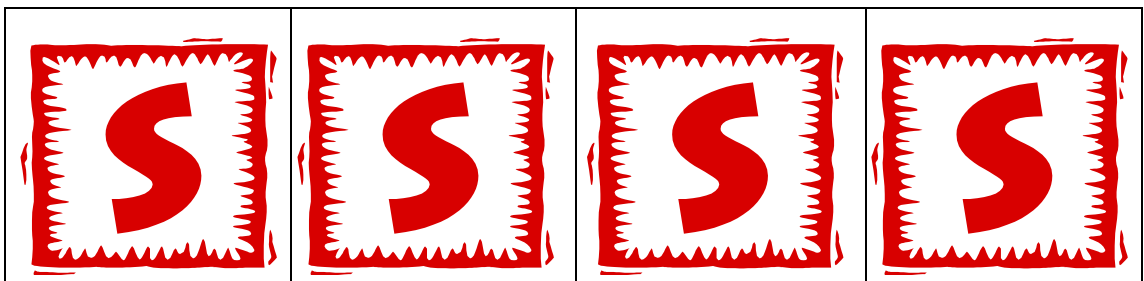
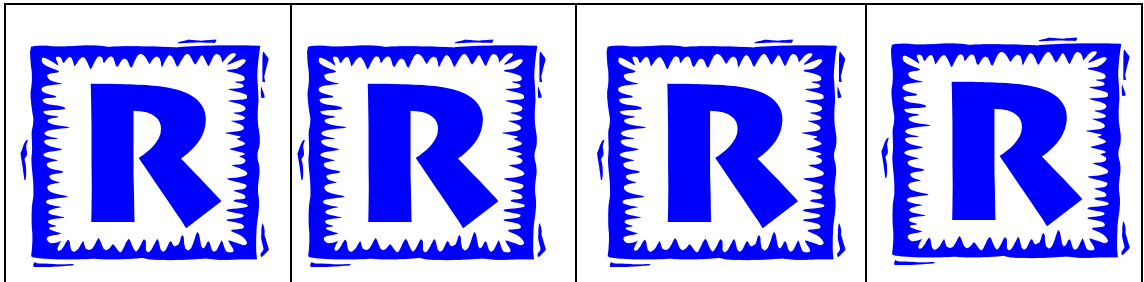
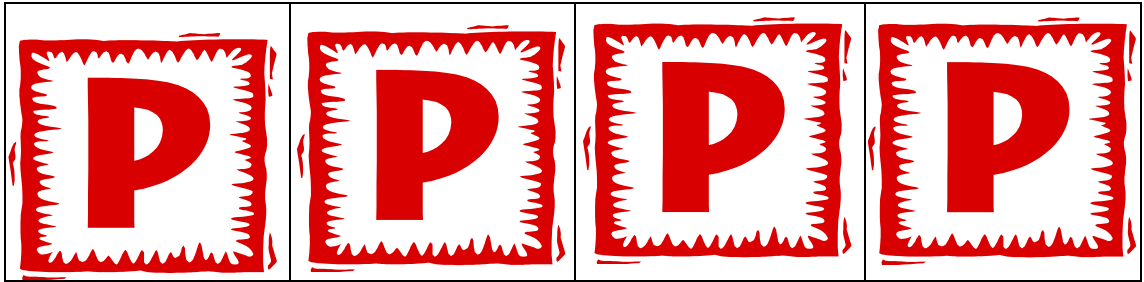
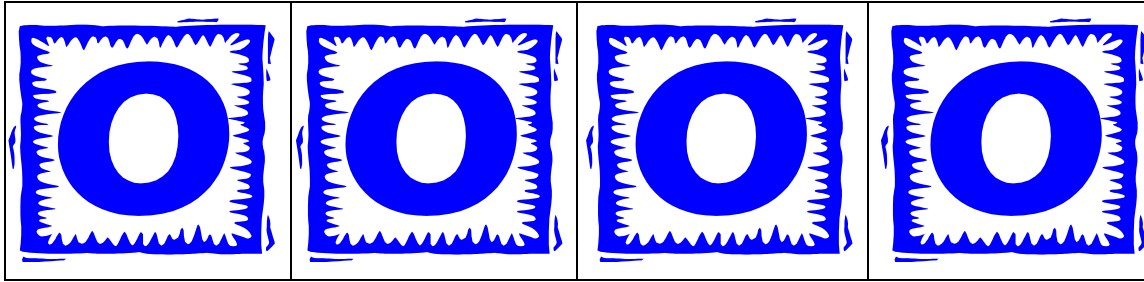
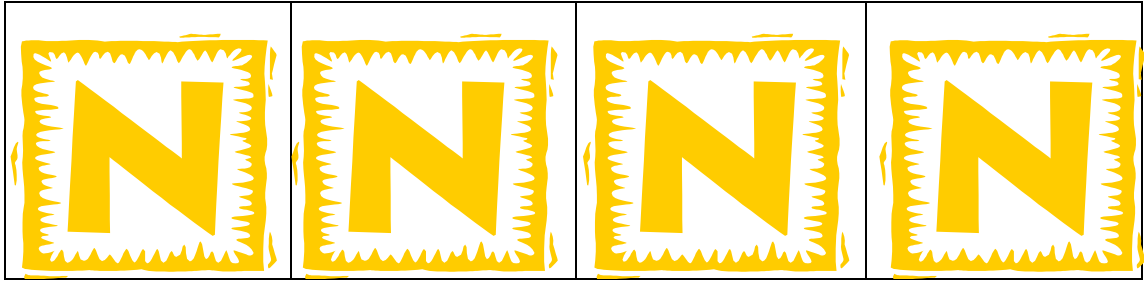
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| <p>I bet you didn't know that Vulpes is a red fox, but do you know about any other creatures that begin with a V?</p> <p><i>Vampire, Vixen</i></p> | <p>Vegemite is an Australian spread made from yeast products. Do you know other foods or ingredients that begin with a V?</p> <p><i>Vanilla, Vegetables</i></p> | <p>There are several countries that begin with the letter V! The question is: Can you remember any of them now?</p> <p><i>Vietnam, Vatican City</i></p> | <p>The letter V is not common in the beginning of sport! But can you remember any?</p> <p><i>Volleyball</i></p> |
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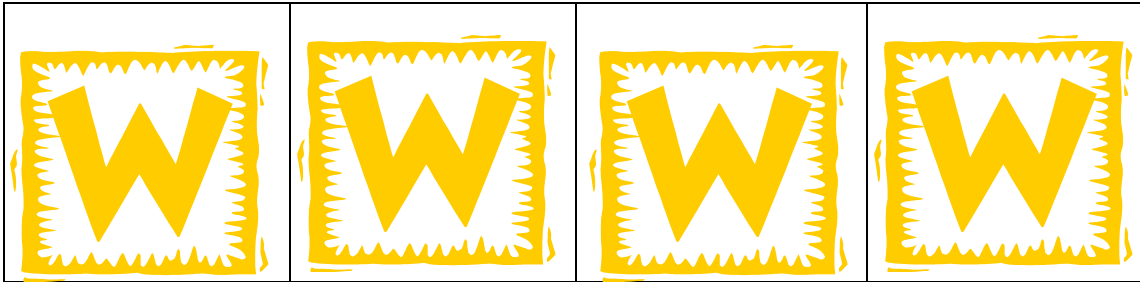
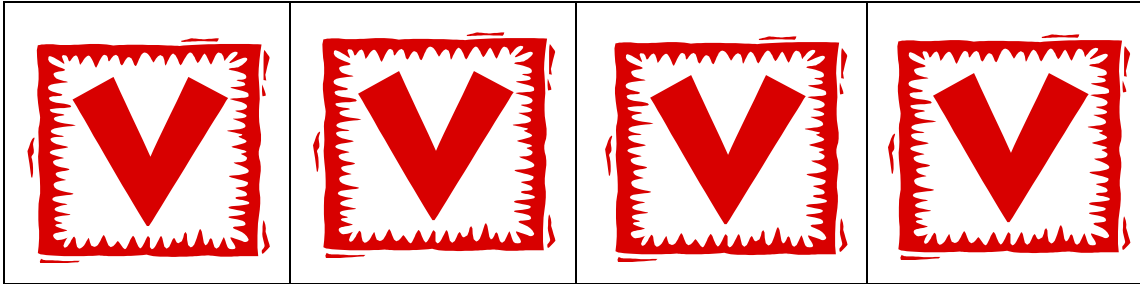
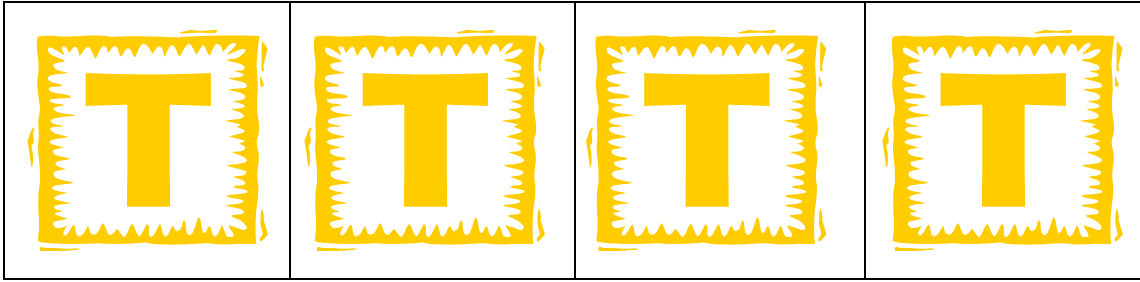
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| <p>Winning starts with the letter W and winning plays a big part in most sports! Can you name any sports that start with a W?</p> <p><i>Water Polo</i></p> | <p>Because of how few countries begin with this letter, name a city that begins with W instead?</p> <p><i>Washington, Winnipeg</i></p> | <p>A Wallaroo is one of 4 types of Kangaroo-like animals in Australia. Can you name other creatures that begin with the letter W?</p> <p><i>Whale, Wolf, Worm</i></p> | <p>Waldorf salad is a type of salad often made at Christmas. Can you name other types of food that start with the letter W?</p> <p><i>Watermelon, Waffles</i></p> |
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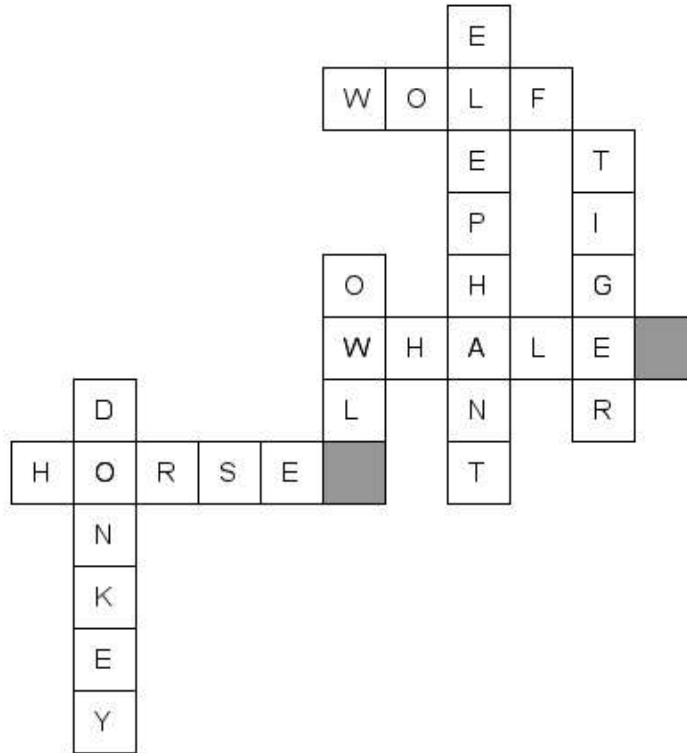








CROSSWORD



Down

1.



3.



4.



6.



Across

2.



5.



7.



Answers:

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F | R | O | G | | | | | | | | |
| | | F | | | | | | | | | |
| | | I | | | G | S | | | | | |
| | | S | | O | | N | | | | | |
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| | | L | | | G | E | | | | | F |
| | L | | | O | | | | | M | A | |
| A | | | | D | | | | O | | | R |
| | | | | | | | U | | | | I |
| | | | | | | S | | | | | G |
| | | N | O | I | L | E | | | | | |