



5 Games Inspired by the 6 Principles

by [Rita F. Naughton](#)

In returning to school this fall, what better way to start the new academic year than with impactful games based on [TESOL's 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners®](#)? The 6 Principles “are not revolutionary or groundbreaking concepts in language learning. They are well-established guidelines drawn from decades of research in language pedagogy and language acquisition theory,” to be implemented and curated to bring successful learning experiences to all language learners (TESOL, 2018, p. 7).

One way to utilize the 6 Principles is through board games. Using board games in second language acquisition is a “response to the need to find innovative teaching-learning-evaluation-self-evaluation methods” for the 21st century (Boghian et al., 2019, p. 52). Moreover, board games

provide hands-on and heads-on skill and knowledge development for people of all ages on all subjects. Not only do well-designed games create an engaging atmosphere, they also provide a non-threatening, playful, yet competitive environment in which to focus on content and reinforce and apply learning. (Treher, 2001, p. 3)

Thus, by employing the board games inspired by the following 6 Principles, you will be utilizing tools which create active learning and permit social stimulation and customization of, persistence in, and reinforcement of playful English language learning experiences that are democratic and meritocratic (Cassie, 2018).

TESOL's 6 Principles

Principle 1. Know your learners

Principle 2. Create conditions for language learning

Principle 3. Design high-quality lessons for language development

Principle 4. Adapt lesson delivery as needed

Principle 5. Monitor and assess student language development

Principle 6. Engage and collaborate within a community of practice



The following games encompass practice in grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

1. Grammar Bingo

This game targets grammar practice with asking and responding to questions. It requires the use of the simple present, simple past, and present perfect tenses. The questions are in the form of *Wh*- questions, *Yes/No* questions, and *Do/Does* questions.

Steps

1. All students are given a game worksheet (see Appendix A for an example) and asked to circulate around the room to find answers to questions in the boxes on their worksheet.
2. Students aim to find classmates who can answer “yes” to the questions and provide detail information.
3. Students must ask at least five different students questions.
4. Students are to write the person’s answers at the bottom of the sheet and write their names in the boxes. The answers should be grammatically correct.
5. To complete the game, the students need to have answers to five questions in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally), or four questions with the star box. When they’ve achieved this, the student calls out “BINGO!”
6. This student will report their answers to the class, and you write them on the board for everyone to see. Encourage other students to share their answers as well.
7. All participate in evaluating and assessing the answers.

According to The 6 Principles, there are specific important characteristics related to education, language background, and resources that teachers should seek to find out about their English learners:

Home country	Access to supportive resources
Home language	Learning preferences
Cultural background	Cultural knowledge
Level of proficiency in the four English domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing)	Life experiences
Home language literacy level	Interests
Home language oral proficiency	Gifts and talents
Educational background	Life goals
Special needs	Socioemotional background
(TESOL, 2018, p. 37)	Sociopolitical context of home country

You should adjust the questions for this game based on your own teaching context and the needs and levels of your students. The chart in Appendix B provides a variety of Bingo questions for this game that target students' unique characteristics; the questions are shown in relation to the characteristics listed here.

How Does Grammar Bingo Address The 6 Principles?

- *Principle 1:* This game allows for the gathering of linguistic, educational, and personal information to better know your learners.
- *Principle 2:* It creates a welcoming environment for language learning and acclimates the learners in a new learning environment. This game is an ideal icebreaker.
- *Principle 3:* This grammar bingo game communicates learning objectives and integrates language learning and content to further language development.
- *Principle 4:* This game is versatile; it can be adapted to fit many grammatical structures and learners' proficiency levels.
- *Principle 5:* This game facilitates the monitoring and assessing of the language progress. The teacher can note errors and provide appropriate feedback.

2. Snakes and Ladders: Grammar

This game targets the correct usage of adverb clause words/markers: *before, while, after, during, when, until, as soon as, and by the time.*

Steps

1. Prepare the following materials: Snakes and Ladders board (see Figure 1 for a template), pawn pieces, and die with numbers. See Appendix C for example text featuring information gap sentences and targeting adverb clauses. Optional: sheets of paper and pencils for checking answers.
2. To begin the game, two to four students will decide the order of play. The first student player will toss the die and move the pawn the appropriate number of squares, as shown on the die.

3. The student will read the sentence and determine which adverb clause word is missing from the sentence. A list of possible answers appears on the game board.
4. The student will give the answer, and the other players will determine if the answer is correct. If it is, the pawn piece will stay on that square. If the sentence is incorrect, the student will move back to the previous square.
5. If the students cannot determine if the answer is correct, they are to ask you to check the answer. Answers can be written down on a separate piece of paper.
6. Some squares are “ladders” and direct students to go forward spaces. Some squares are “snakes” and direct students to go back spaces or skip a turn.

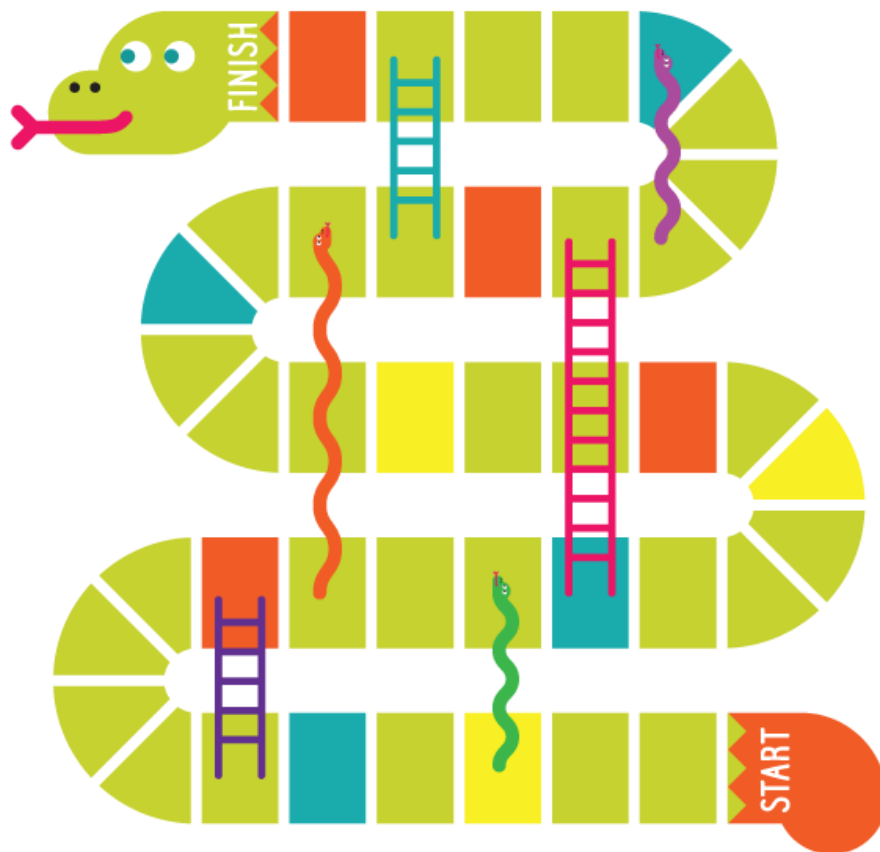


Figure 1. Snakes and Ladders template.

How Does Grammar Snakes and Ladders Address The 6 Principles?

- *Principle 2:* This game creates a safe and welcoming classroom environment by lowering the students’ grammar learning apprehension through game playing, thereby increasing their enthusiasm and self-confidence.

- *Principle 3:* This game can be used to assist learners in writing their own sentences using adverb clauses.
- *Principle 4:* This template can be redesigned to teach noun and adjective clauses.
- *Principle 5:* This game allows both learners and teachers to monitor and assess the learners' language development and provide effective feedback.

3. Snakes and Ladders: Vocabulary

This game targets vocabulary related to unit content in a variety of ways: sentence, synonym, antonym, or part of speech.

Steps

1. For this game, you will need the following materials: Snakes and Ladders board (Figure 1), a die, printed lyrics of a song or songs, a list of vocabulary words from the lyrics, sheets of paper, pencils, a pawn for each player/learner.
2. Before the game begins, introduce students to the lyrics of a song that relates to your current topic of study.
3. Lead the students in a choral reading of the song. Review vocabulary words during this process. Use and encourage gestures to assist in clarification and retention of vocabulary words.
4. Play the song for your students and encourage them to sing along.
5. To begin the game, each student places a pawn on the Start space. The first student throws the die and moves the pawn the number of squares shown on the die.
6. Each square on the board lists a vocabulary word from the song. To stay on the square, the player must correctly write a synonym, an antonym, the part of speech of the word, or a sentence using the word to stay on the square. If their use of the vocabulary word is incorrect, the pawn is moved back to the previous square.
7. Students take turns while playing the game; if a player lands on a ladder, they move up the ladder (forward on the board). If a player lands on a snake, they must move down to the tail of the snake (backward on the board).
8. The student to reach the last square first is the winner. Monitor and check for correct answers throughout gameplay.

How Does Vocabulary Snakes and Ladders Address The 6 Principles?

- *Principle 1:* Depending on song choice, this game can allow for sharing information about students' cultural beliefs and personal experiences.

- *Principle 3:* This game yields subsequent lesson activities to further language development: choral reading, singing, vocabulary identification, part of speech identification, and using the vocabulary in speech and writing in authentic ways.
- *Principle 4:* This game is versatile and adaptable. It may be used with different units, songs, poems, and speeches.
- *Principle 5:* Teachers can assess students by observing their vocabulary use and measuring student vocabulary knowledge and growth.

4. Spatial Board Game: Debate 4 Corners

In this game, the classroom is the gameboard; it is ideal for units containing debates and logical arguments, and it allows the students to move around the classroom and express their views on a topic.

Steps

1. For this game, students will need debate signs and a game cube. To create the game cube, glue or tape together a paper or cardboard cube with arguable statements on each side (see Figure 2). Some example statements related to a unit on war and peace:
 - Nobody can bring peace but yourself.
 - Peace comes from confronting problems courageously.
 - War settles nothing.
 - Peace cannot be kept by force.
 - It's okay to take one life to save five.
 - War is a crime.



Figure 2. Debate 4 Corners game cube.

2. Before playing, place signs on the walls in each of the four corners of the classroom: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.
3. Students gather in the middle of the classroom. One student tosses the game cube and reads aloud the statement that appears on top.
4. Students then move to the corner of the room that matches their personal viewpoint concerning the statement. Once students have chosen a position, they need to justify their choices. In a small classroom, each student can speak. In a large classroom have the students discuss within their group for a few minutes and then have one student in each group voice/defend the position of the group. *Note:* It is important to teach students the proper debate etiquette of respecting one another's opinions and giving each speaker sufficient time to present their views and beliefs.

5. Students can choose to stay in their corner after justifying their positions or they can change corners if they change their viewpoints/minds.
6. Students then gather back in the middle of the classroom to toss the game cube again and justify a new statement. (If a statement is rolled that has already been discussed, the student rolls again.) About 5–10 minutes should be spent on each statement.
7. The game is over after a specific time limit has been reached; I recommend 15–20 minutes, depending on the number of students and their proficiency level.

How Does the Spatial Board Game “Debate 4 Corners” Address The 6 Principles?

- *Principle 1:* The spatial board game permits the learners to assess and express their beliefs on significant human interest topics, revealing their personal views and perspectives.
- *Principle 2:* Students connect content with learning in an exciting and safe way that allows them to express themselves.
- *Principle 3:* This game can follow Snakes and Ladders: Vocabulary and be a warm-up for an argumentative discussion, formal debate, or argumentation research paper.
- *Principle 4:* This game’s versatility and adaptability are limitless. The spatial board game can be used with abstract vocabulary, fact vs. fiction statements, and even planning daily routines. It can be used with all age and ability levels.

5. Vocabulary Jeopardy

This game targets vocabulary learning in a virtual environment. See Figure 6.

Steps

1. To play this game, you will need the following materials: internet and projector, bells for each student, and prepared questions. Create an online Jeopardy board at jeopardylabs.com, selecting categories and question values (see Figure 3).
2. Prior to gameplay give each student a bell. Depending on the students’ vocabulary knowledge, you may choose to allow students to use the vocabulary word list during a portion of the game or the entire game.
3. Show or read out the questions to the students. You can begin with the lowest question values and progress to higher question values, or you can choose questions randomly.
4. To answer the question, students must ring their bell. The first student to do so (based on the honor system) must give their answer in the form of a question. If the answer is correct, the points value is added to the student’s score. If not, no points are added. To see if a student is correct, click on the box and reveal the answer.

- Gameplay continues until the questions on the jeopardy board have all been answered. The student with the most points wins.

PART OF SPEECH	SYNONYMS	RHYME TIME	SYLLABLES	ANTONYMS
It is the part of speech of "economic."	The synonym of this word is "financial."	This word rhymes with "dough."	This word is the only word on the list that has one syllable and begins with an "s."	The antonym of this word is "copy."
It is a verb that means "to carry."	The synonym of this word is "destroy."	This word rhymes with "train."	This word is the only word on the list that has four syllables.	The antonym of this word is "to lose."
It is a noun that means "an engine."	The synonym of this word is "past."	This word rhymes with "sock."	This three-syllable word is a verb and means "to smoke."	The antonym of this word is "to keep."
This word can be a noun, an adjective, and a verb. It begins with the letter "B."	The synonym of this word is "to get."	This word rhymes with "seat."	This three-syllable phrase means "to occupy."	The antonym of this word is "to fill."
These two words can be both nouns and verbs. One begins with a "c" and the other a "p."	The synonym of this word is "propagating."	This word rhymes with "joyfulness."	This one-syllable word has the same letters as a number from one to ten.	Two antonyms of this word are "repair" and "fix."

Figure 3. Jeopardy online vocabulary game example. [Click here](#) to play this game online.

How Does Vocabulary Jeopardy Address The 6 Principles?

- Principle 3:* After playing this game, the students can be given another vocabulary list in which they create their own jeopardy questions and answers. Student-created questions can be included in a subsequent jeopardy games to advance vocabulary development and retention.
- Principle 4:* The jeopardy vocabulary game is versatile and adaptable because it can be used with a variety of materials to advance language learning. This includes content-specific vocabulary words, grammar concepts, and listening and speaking skills.
- Principle 5:* Through the vocabulary jeopardy game, teachers are able to check and monitor student vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation and are able to help students make a plan and set goals to improve their vocabulary learning.
- Principle 6:* This jeopardy vocabulary game can be a means to engage and collaborate with other classes. Teachers can work with colleagues to align instruction and host school- or community-wide tournaments including multiple classes.

Conclusion

Whether you are a veteran or beginning teacher, you will find that with these 6 Principle–inspired board games you will have an adaptable and versatile toolkit to facilitate those first few

weeks of the school year, as well as games that will prove invaluable throughout the school year. May these games spark laughter and pleasant recollection in your students' English language procurement journey.

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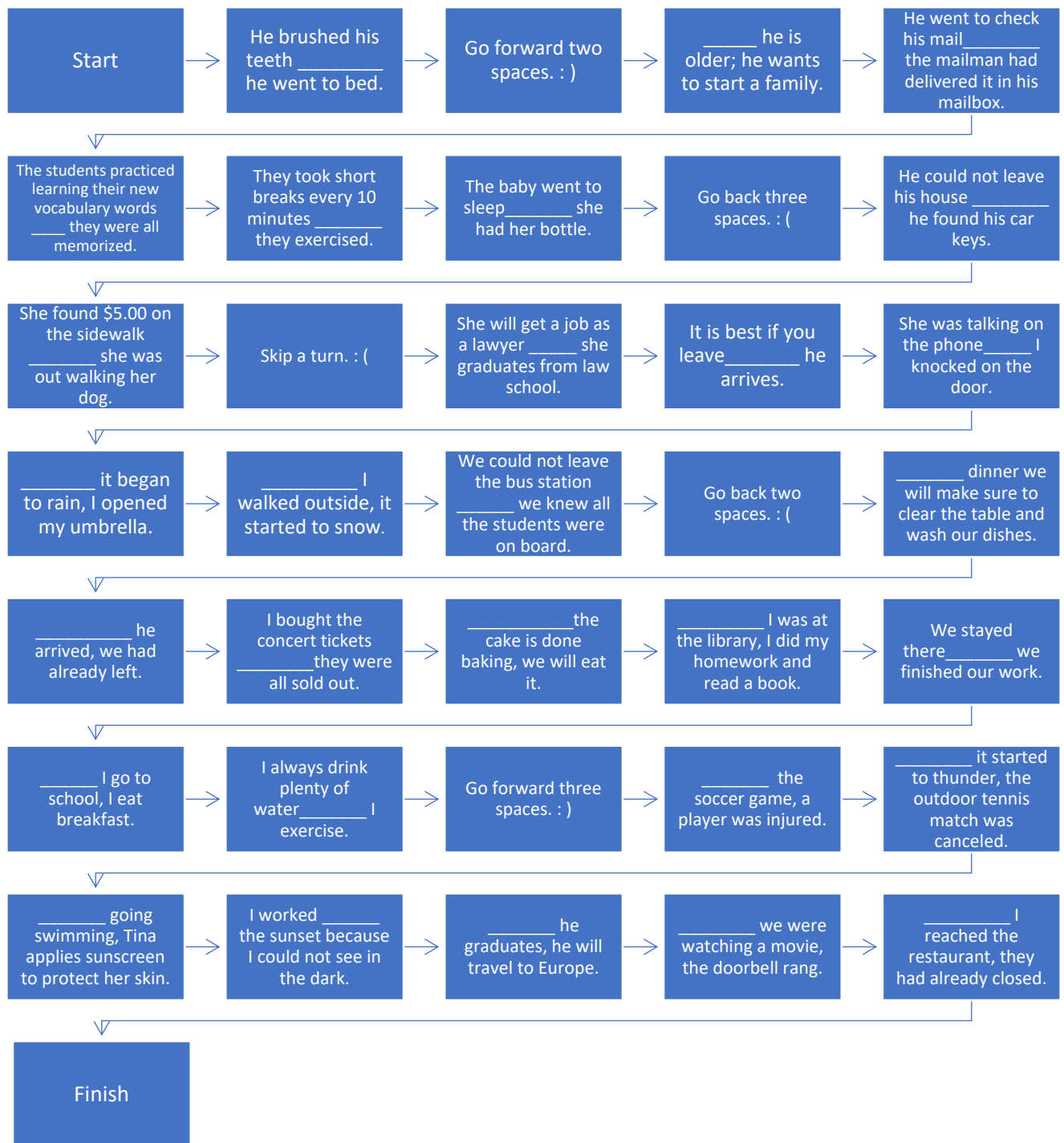
Appendix A: Grammar Bingo Worksheet

Where are you from? (province/town/city)	Did you visit the US before starting school here? Explain.	How long have you been in the US?	Do you have a dog or a cat? Explain.	How many brothers and sisters do you have?
What is something you'd like to share about your culture?	What do you like about the US?	What is easy for you when learning English?	Why did you choose this university to study?	What is your major?
What is your favorite song and why?	Who is your best friend? Why?		What are your immediate learning goals?	What do you want to do after you graduate?
Do you speak more than one language? Explain.	How long have you been studying English?	Do you play a musical instrument? Explain.	What is your native language?	What are your interests outside of school?
What is difficult for you in learning English?	Have you traveled much in the US since you arrived here? Explain.	Do you enjoy reading? Explain.	What do you find strange or different about the US?	What is your favorite movie and why?

Appendix B: Grammar Bingo Questions Characteristics

Where are you from?	Home country	What do you want to do after you graduate?	Life goals / Gifts and talents
What can you tell me about your home country?	Home country	What do you hope to achieve within the next 5 years?	Life goals
Did you visit the US before starting school here? Explain.	Life experiences	Do you speak more than one language? Explain.	Home language
How long have you been in the US?	Life experiences	How long have you been studying English?	Life experiences
Do you have a dog or a cat? Explain.		Do you play a musical instrument? Explain.	Gifts and talents
How many brothers and sisters do you have?	Socioemotional background	What is your native language and do you speak it at home?	Home language
Tell me something about your culture.	Cultural background	What are your interests outside of school?	Interests
How similar is your culture to the U.S. culture?	Cultural background	What is difficult for you in learning English?	Educational background
How is your culture different from the U.S. culture?	Cultural background	Tell me something about your education in your native country.	Educational background
What do you like about the US?	Life experiences	Have you traveled much in the US since you arrived here? Explain.	Life experiences
What is easy for you when learning English?	Gifts and talents	Do you enjoy reading? Explain.	Learning preferences
Why did you choose this university to study?	Interests	How do you prefer to learn to read and write in English?	Learning preferences
What is your major?	Interests	What do you find strange or different about the US?	Socioemotional background
What is your favorite song and why?	Interests	What is your favorite movie and why?	Interests
Who is your best friend? Why?	Access to supportive resources	What is your favorite American dish and why?	Cultural knowledge

Appendix C: Snakes & Ladders Adverb Clauses Game



List of possible adverb clause word options:

before	after	during	when
while	until	as soon as	by the time