

Practical Gaming in the Classroom

Why game in the classroom?

- Change of pace
- Fun for the students
- Fun for the teacher
- An excellent way to teach...
 - English
 - Thinking Skills
 - Logic
 - Social Skills
 - Strategy

Golden Rules of Gaming when teaching

- 1. You are the Game Master**
 - Break Rules!
 - Make Rules!
 - Change the Game!
 - Change the Goal!
 - Tilt the Game!
- 2. If a game doesn't go over well, immediately stop or switch.**
 - If the kids aren't having fun, they won't learn.
- 3. Keep games exciting, quick, and fun.**
 - It's not how fun you think the game is, it's how fun the kids think it is.
- 4. Know your games.**
 - If you don't know something, make it up!

Don'ts when teaching games

- Don't win at all costs. This isn't about who the best player is.
- Don't allow fights between students.
- Don't allow "friendly" cooperation
- Don't let the game slow down. Keep the game moving, with "downtime" at a minimum.
- Don't allow non-English communication
- Don't be rigid and inflexible
- Don't have too much downtime
- Don't worry about finishing the game.

Do's when teaching games

- Do keep it fair
- Do simplify (if necessary) - but realize that children are smarter than you might think.
- Do explain everything thoroughly in English
- Do enforce penalties and rewards
- Do improvise
- Do setup and prepare
- Do play a variety of games

Recommended Game List

Name	Company	Skills
10 Days in Africa (or USA, Americas, Asia, Europe)	Out of the Box Publishing	<i>geography, logic</i>
Acquire	Hasbro	<i>financial</i>
Airlines Europe	Rio Grande Games	<i>financial</i>
Alpha Playing Cards	Alpha Playing Cards, Inc.	<i>spelling, vocabulary</i>
Anagramania	Anagramania Games	<i>math, spelling</i>
Apples to Apples	Out of the Box Publishing	<i>vocabulary</i>
Ark of the Covenant	Cactus Games	<i>Bible, connection</i>
Basari	Out of the Box Publishing	<i>trading, negotiation</i>
Beowulf	Fantasy Flight Games	<i>literature, auctions</i>
Blokus	Mattel	<i>spatial, shapes</i>
Bohnanza	Rio Grande Games	<i>math, trading</i>
Can You See What I See?	Gamewright	<i>language arts, social skills</i>
Carcassonne	Rio Grande Games	<i>spatial, risk taking</i>
Catch the Match	Playroom Entertainment	<i>speed, visual</i>
Chrononauts	Looney Labs	<i>history</i>
Cloud 9	Our of the Box Publishing	<i>wise decisions</i>
Cluzzle	Northstar Games	<i>creativity</i>
Code 777	Stronghold Games	<i>deduction, reasoning</i>
Cosmic Encounter	Fantasy Flight Games	<i>negotiation, math</i>
Counting ZZZZS	Blood and Cardstock	<i>creativity, story building</i>
Diplomacy	Hasbro	<i>negotiation</i>
Disorder	R & R Games	<i>reading, spelling skills</i>
Empire Builder	Mayfair Games	<i>logic, financial</i>
Fits	Ravensburger	<i>spatial, logic</i>
For Sale	Gryphon Games	<i>money, decision making</i>
Forbidden Island	Gamewright	<i>cooperation</i>
Granny Apples	Gamewright	<i>fractions</i>
I'm the Boss	FRED Distribution	<i>negotiation</i>
Journeys of Paul	Cactus Games	<i>Bible</i>
Kingdoms	Fantasy Flight Games	<i>math</i>
Letterflip	Out of the Box Publishing	<i>spelling, deduction</i>
Liberte	Warfrog Games	<i>math, history</i>
Linq	Endless Games	<i>deduction, creativity</i>

Mamma Mia	Rio Grande Games	<i>memory</i>
Memoir '44	Days of Wonder	<i>history, strategy</i>
Modern Art	Mayfair Games	<i>money management</i>
Monkey Memory	Playroom Entertainment	<i>memory</i>
Mr. Bigshot	Mr. Bigshot, Inc.	<i>stocks</i>
My Word	Out of the Box Publishing	<i>spelling, vocabulary</i>
Mystery of the Abbey	Days of Wonder	<i>deduction</i>
Once Upon a Time	Atlas Games	<i>literature - story telling</i>
Pandemic	Z-man Games	<i>cooperation</i>
Polarity	Temple Games	<i>magnetism</i>
Power Grid	Rio Grande Games	<i>math analysis</i>
Pueblo	Rio Grande Games	<i>geometry</i>
Ricochet Robot	Rio Grande Games	<i>logic, puzzle</i>
Right Turn, Left Turn	Playroom Entertainment	<i>right and left</i>
Robo Rally	Hasbro	<i>logic</i>
Settlers of Canaan	Cactus Games	<i>Bible, negotiation</i>
Settlers of Catan	Mayfair Games	<i>trading, negotiation</i>
Shadows over Camelot	Days of Wonder	<i>cooperation</i>
Sleuth	Face 2 Face Games	<i>deduction</i>
Spinergy	Gnu Games	<i>creativity, writing</i>
Tales of Arabian Nights	Z-man Games	<i>story telling, literature</i>
Thingamajig	R & R Games	<i>vocabulary, word usage</i>
Ticket to Ride	Days of Wonder	<i>set collecting, choice making</i>
Time's Up	R & R Games	<i>acting</i>
TransAmerica	Rio Grande Games	<i>geography, logic</i>
VEX Card Game	VEX	<i>geography</i>
VisualEyes	Buffalo Games, Inc.	<i>vocabulary, word building</i>
Word Jam	Mayfair Games	<i>vocabulary</i>
Word on the Street	Out of the Box Publishing	<i>spelling, vocabulary</i>
You've Been Sentenced	McNeill Designs	<i>grammar, vocabulary</i>
Zendo	Looney Labs	<i>deduction</i>

Recommended Resource List

Places to buy Commercial Board Games on the Internet

www.funagaingames.com - The most comprehensive place to buy board and card games on the internet. Reviews, recommendations, etc.

www.fairplaygames.com/

www.thoughthammer.com/

www.coolstuffinc.com – Based here in Orlando, very inexpensive

Board Game Resources on the Internet

<http://www.g4ed.com/> - Gaming and Education. Should be your first stop.

www.boardgamegeek.com - The best source for board game information, variants, reviews on the internet. Can be overwhelming with the amount of information.

www.thedicetower.com - My site, with hundreds of reviews and interviews.

www.thegamesjournal.com/ - An online magazine with board game information and reviews. (Now extinct - but several good articles in the archives)

<http://boardgames.about.com/> - A nice site, with forums and game information.

<http://www.usedboardgames.com/> - Trying to find board games? Good place to start.

<http://www.gamerdad.com> - reviews of all types of games (not just board games) from a family perspective

What are modern board games?

If you ask someone off the street to name ten board games, invariably you will hear titles like Monopoly, Jenga, The Game of Life, Risk, and so on. Many of these games were designed decades ago. Monopoly, for example, was first published by Parker Brothers in 1935 based on a game presented by Charles Darrow—and there is much evidence to support that the game existed in various forms for many years prior to Mr. Darrow bringing it to Parker Brothers.

The 1980s and 90s saw the rise of a new form of board game that is slowly becoming very popular. Many of these games originated in Germany and other European countries and have become known as German, Euro or designer games. (The term “Euro Game” is most predominant.) These games are well known for requiring thought and skill, utilising strategy and tactics, being relatively short (most play in an hour or less), and having simple rules (with most rules booklets being less than two pages).

Two of the most famous Euro games are The Settlers of Catan, a game in which players trade resources and buy new developments in order to build the most highly developed and largest settlement network, and Carcassonne, a game in which players lay down tiles—slowly building a puzzle-like map—and use playing pieces to claim map segments like cities and roads, which score points when completed.

Why use these games in schools?

- by Giles Pritchard

Euro games are well suited to an educational setting because of the skills they require and utilise, the thought they stimulate, and of course, the time they take to play.

As many as a thousand board games are published every year around the world; many have direct or indirect benefits to pedagogical foci. In truth, a game can be found for almost every (if not every) area in any curriculum document written.

The most useful skills learned through playing games are some of the most valuable the school system can provide, namely the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills involved with respectable and meaningful person-to-person interaction. The beauty of board games is that they are played by a group of people. Whether the group is all friends, all strangers, or a mix of the two, the game is the focus of their social interaction for the playing time, and in that time individual players will sometimes benefit and sometimes disadvantage other players. All of these interactions, combined with the fact that in a game there can (usually) be only one winner, mean that players learn—or should learn—to treat each other courteously, to behave in an honourable fashion, and to be good sportspersons. (Some games are cooperative, with players competing against the game itself, and these are excellent for teaching the dynamics of teamwork).

Games can be selected to target specific pedagogical needs, to be the focus of a lesson, to reinforce that lesson, and to help a teacher assess whether a student has internalised and can apply a lesson outside the context of the lesson, an ability usually called deep learning.

Games are also fun to play, and this key aspect should never be forgotten however serious the pedagogical application. It is precisely because games are fun that students will engage in them, and it is precisely because they are fun that students will keep playing them, thereby reinforcing any pedagogical focus for which the game was used.

How can games be used in schools?

Games can be used in a variety of ways to teach, reinforce, and assess, not to mention (perhaps most importantly) to have fun. A part of being able to use games appropriately at school is picking games that will suit the intended use of the games collection.

Games can, and with familiarity will, be used in classrooms to support or extend teaching foci, but a school-based game collection can sometimes best support extra-curricula clubs and activities such as a school games club, board game nights, usable board game libraries, and the like. These provide an opportunity for students to enjoy and learn from their gaming experiences away from the focussed and often quite specific learning environment of the classroom.

Games are fun, and playing them should be an enjoyable experience, not a chore. As a by-product of playing a game, the student reinforces a particular set of skills, interacts with other people in a positive and relevant way, and is challenged to think for him- or herself.

School-based game clubs in particular are an excellent activity to provide for students. Not only do they provide an environment in which games can be played and enjoyed, they also supply a social context outside what is normal for students, which can encourage the development or refinement of important intra- and interpersonal skills.

Schools might want to use games to support and develop ESL students, to challenge and extend gifted students, to assist with special needs children, and to help promote healthy person-to-person interactions. The long and short of it is: Games can be used in many positive ways in the context of a school environment.

Which games should be used?

Not all games are right for all age ranges. The games listed below are grouped according to age and other topics; more detailed descriptions of these games are available in [this downloadable document](#).

10 Good Games for Lower School Kids:

- *Big Top*
- *Blink*
- *Chicken Cha Cha Cha*
- *Gulo Gulo*
- *Halli Galli*
- *Make 'N' Break*
- *My Word Junior*
- *Number Chase*
- *Piggy Back*
- *Spooky Stairs*
- *Fairy Tale*
- *Lord of the Rings*
- *No Thanks!*
- *O Zoo le Mio*
- *Pirate's Cove*
- *RoboRally*
- *Samurai*
- *Settlers of Catan*
- *Shadows over Camelot*
- *Through the Desert*
- *Ticket to Ride*
- *Torres*
- *TransAmerica*

Good Maths Games:

10 Good Games for Middle School Kids:

- *10 Days in Africa*
- *Blokus*
- *Cartagena*
- *Coloretto*
- *Emerald*
- *Fish Eat Fish*
- *Hey! That's my Fish!*
- *My Word*
- *Nobody but us Chickens*
- *Rat-A-Tat-Cat*
- *Alhambra*
- *Battle Line*
- *Blink*
- *Carcassonne*
- *Dragon Land*
- *Dragon's Gold*
- *Emerald*
- *Fairy Tale*
- *Fish Eat Fish*
- *Halli Galli*
- *Hey! That's my Fish*
- *Lost Cities*
- *Maya Madness*
- *No Thanks!*
- *Number Chase*
- *O Zoo le Mio*
- *Samurai*
- *Sequence*
- *Through the Desert*
- *Torres*

20 Good Games for Senior School Kids:

- *Alhambra*
- *Bang!*
- *Blokus*
- *Carcassonne*
- *China*
- *Citadels*
- *Dawn Under*
- *Fluxx*

Good Literacy Games:

- *Fluxx*

- *My Word*
- *My Word Junior*
- *Once Upon a Time*
- *Shadows over Camelot*

Good Spatial Skills & Spatial Problem Solving Games:

- *10 Days in Africa*
- *Abalone*
- *Blink*
- *Blokus*
- *Carcassonne*
- *Cartagena*
- *Collide-O*
- *Fjords*
- *Make 'N' Break*
- *O Zoo le Mio*
- *Pente*
- *RoboRally*
- *The Legend of Landlock*

- *Through the Desert*
- *Torres*
- *TransAmerica*

Good Team Work and Negotiation Games:

- *Bang!*
- *Dragon's Gold*
- *Lord of the Rings*
- *Once Upon a Time*
- *Settlers of Catan*
- *Shadows over Camelot*

Good Memory Skill Games:

- *Dawn Under*
- *Fish Eat Fish*
- *Maya Madness*
- *Once upon a Time*
- *Rat-A-Tat-Cat*
- *Spooky Stairs*

Tom Vasel is a board game enthusiast and teacher, currently teaching high school math at Colonial Christian School in Homestead, Florida. Tom is the producer of the Dice Tower, an audio and video podcast about board and card games, with over 1500 reviews of different games. He has successfully used games in the classroom for the last decade, and loves using them to make learning fun. He can be reached at tomvasel@gmail.com