

Fun for all the family Part Two- 26 games for the alphabet and spelling

English spelling being one of those things that even English teachers sometimes have problems with, the game ideas below range from very simple physical games for pre-school kids that have never seen an English letter before to intellectual challenges for adults who are still struggling with the many pronunciations of –ough. And if that intellectual stimulation tires your adult students out, you can always adapt a physical game for them from this list instead.

1. **Letter slap.** Students race to slap their hands down on the letter the teacher says, or the first letter, last letter or vowel sound of a word they say or name of a flashcard they hold up. Can also be done with all the letters of short words.
2. **Letter jump.** Similar to Letter slap, but students jump onto large letters (minimum A4) that are scattered around the floor instead.
3. **Spelling run and slap.** The teacher says the name of a letter or letters of the alphabet and the students run and slap something in the classroom that starts with that letter, is a colour that starts with that letter, can be described by an adjective that starts with that letter, is spelt with the mixed up letters the teacher gives etc.
4. **Spelling anti-cocktail** Students are given the letters of a word mixed, e.g. as plastic magnetic letters, and have to put them in order as a teacher pronounces a word or holds up a flashcard. The teacher can then spell the word out so that they can check.
5. **Letters in the dark** Students are blindfolded or close their eyes and have to find the correct magnetic letters on the table or whiteboard and do any other of the games above. Alternatively, give them a letter to feel and identify.
6. **Chinese whispers** The students line up in two rows and the teacher whispers the name of a letter, the spelling of a word etc. into the ear of the first person in each row. They then whisper it down the row as quickly as possible and the person at the front has to do one of the things above, e.g. run and slap the first letter.
7. **Letter formation** With any of the prompts above, students rush to make the shape of the relevant letter or letters, using their fingers, whole bodies, Lego blocks, play doh, a piece of rope or string, pipe cleaners etc.
8. **A B bee** Student draw pictures of something beginning with the one letter of the alphabet, using that letter as part of the picture, e.g. using the letter B as the body of a bee and drawing wings etc. on it.
9. **I-spy** The teacher says “I spy with my little eye something beginning with (A)”

and the students guess which of the things beginning with A they can see the teacher is thinking of.

10. **Spelling plus errors equals?** Students are given two different lists of words that are difficult to spell and/ or pronounce and have to spell the words out for their partner, but adding an error to each one. Their partner has to listen and try and identify the error.
11. **Spelling running dictation** Give pairs of students a sheet with pictures of objects that are difficult to spell and/ or pronounce, or written as words with errors or with letters missing. The pairs of students try to spell the words correctly, then one of them can run out to another room to look at the answer sheet and try to remember as many of the correct answers as they can until they get back to the room and tell their partner what corrections to make. They can run back and forth as many times as they like. With better classes, don't let the student who is running back and forth look at their partner's worksheet at all.
12. **Spelling running dictation** Like the Spelling running dictation, but instead of running back and forth the students shout the correct spellings to their partner.
13. **Where's Adam, Betty and Wally?** Students try to find objects in a very detailed picture beginning with all the letters written on the whiteboard.
14. **Back drawing** The teacher draws a letter on a student's back and they have to show they understand what letter it is by saying the letter, slapping a flashcard etc. Can also be done like Chinese Whispers along a row of students and with the spelling of a whole word.
15. **Air drawing** Like back drawing, but drawing the letter in the air with your finger instead.
16. **Remember the letter. Use** the same set of phonics cards with the same pictures for each letter all the time until you can test and prompt students by slowly revealing the card, giving the letter and getting them to shout out the word, saying the word and getting them to shout out the letter, giving hints (It's a red fruit) and getting them to shout out both the letter and the word, say the letter and get them to mime an action for the word on the card etc.
17. **A to Z in 10 to 1** Students sort picture or word flashcards into order by their spelling while the rest of the class counts down to the time limit. Alphabetical order is easiest, but could also be by number of letters
18. **Spelling pellmanism** Students have to find pairs of cards in a pack that is spread out face down on the table that match in some way by the spelling or pronunciation, e.g. Matching the top half of a letter to the bottom half to make a

letter of the alphabet, matching the lower case letters to the upper case ones, matching picture card to first letter, matching two picture cards by the same first letter, or matching two word cards same vowel sound even when spelling is different

19. **Spelling code game** Dictate the alphabet with a different number given to each letter (not in order). When the teacher pronounces a word or sentence, students should convert the letters into numbers using the code that was dictated, add up all the numbers and shout out the answer, allowing the teacher to check if they know the spelling very easily and prompting them to recheck their own answers if they don't get the right total first time.
20. **Alphabet jigsaw** Students put together words or single letters that have been cut up.
21. **Alphabet countdown.** Tell students to start whatever game you are playing when you say a particular letter, e.g. T. Start chanting the alphabet until you reach that letter, at which point they should rush to start the game. Take off points from anyone who jumps the gun. With better groups you could start chanting the alphabet from half way through, chant backwards, or tell them what word you are going to spell out and then spell it out letter by letter until you reach the letter you mentioned before.
22. **Don't complete the word spelling challenge** The first student gives the first letter of a word, e.g. "S". The next student must add a letter that could be the continuation of a real word in English, e.g. After "S", "T" but not "S". Students continue, making sure they are extended part of a real word but not completing a whole word. Any students who actually complete a word with their letter lose a point. If anyone thinks the letter added cannot be part of a real word they can challenge the person who said it. If they can actually say what word it could be part of the challenger loses a point and they get one. If they can't complete it the scoring is reversed.
23. **Do what I spell.** Spell out a whole instruction letter by letter, e.g. J,U,M,P,T,H,R,E,E,T,I,M,E,S. The first student to do the right thing gets a point. They don't have to wait until the spelling is complete, but you might want to take away points for wrong actions.
24. **Spell that DVD.** Students are given a spelling based task to look out for when they are watching a video, e.g. Objects that begin with "th" or words that match the anagrams on the worksheet.
25. **Spelling challenge.** The first student chooses a difficult word to spell then

students spell it around the class. When any student makes a mistake all the others get one point.

26. **Getting to Spell You.** As a getting to know you activity that also includes classroom language they will need all the time (e.g. “How do you spell...?” and “Can you repeat that please?”), you can get students to learn the English spelling for each other’s names. This can be organised as a mingle activity where people walk round and exchange the information of all the spellings they have learnt so far to their new partner, then move onto the next person.