

Word association games are a great way for students to play with vocabulary. The objective of any word association game is to say the first word that pops into one's head that is inspired by the word that is said before.

1 Simple word association circle

- 1 Students stand or sit in a circle. Ask a student to say any word; it doesn't have to be important or clever.
- 2 The student to his or her left says another word, and so on, going around the circle in a clockwise direction. They needn't try to associate their word with the word that is said just before but instead they should say the first word they think of. If they can't think of a word to say, they should just say the word 'banana' so that the 'word-pulse' keeps moving.
- 3 After a while, encourage the class to increase the speed of the words moving around the circle so there are no pauses between one word and the next.
- 4 Stop them after a few minutes and point out any patterns of related words that might have occurred. Suggest that making associations is not very difficult and often happens naturally.
- 5 Ask students if they heard any new words. Give a clear and concise definition of each new word and then ask the class to repeat the word aloud together.
- 6 Correct any pronunciation mistakes and ask the class to repeat the correct pronunciation.

2 Slap, clap, snap

This game is similar to the previous game, except that now the students will use a specific rhythm and they should also actively try to find an association with the words that come before.

- 1 Teach the following four-beat rhythm:
 - a Slap both hands on thighs.
 - b Clap hands.
 - c Snap fingers of one hand.
 - d Snap fingers of the other hand.
- 2 Once the rhythm is established, call on one of the students to begin by saying any word on the 2nd finger snap (d).
- 3 The next time through the four beats, the student to his or her left says another word on the second snap that is associated with the word that was said immediately before, and so on, going around the circle in a clockwise direction.
- 4 Stop them after a few minutes and again, as in the previous game, check for any new words and correct pronunciation.

Extension

It is possible to use the slap, clap, snap rhythm to review vocabulary sets and to practise pronunciation. Review with the class a list of words from a vocabulary set that they need to work on before starting the rhythm. When it's the next student's turn, instead of associating their word with the previous word, they simply say any word in the vocabulary set. Even though this seems rather simple, sometimes students just need various opportunities to say a new word aloud for it to become natural for them. Likewise, this game could also be used to focus on saying words with difficult-to-pronounce sounds, such as past tense *-ed* endings.

Get it right!

Make a list of regular past tense verbs with the students and make sure they know how to pronounce each word correctly before you play the game. Exaggerate the /t/, /d/ and /id/ sounds and encourage them to do so as well when playing the game. Encourage them to add any other regular past tense verbs that they may already know that are not in the list. After playing the game, correct any pronunciation problems or other errors that might have come up, such as saying *catched* instead of *caught*.

3 Last letter

This is another game that can be played by incorporating the slap, clap, snap rhythm established in the previous game. Instead of saying the first word that comes to mind when hearing the previous word, students say the first word they think of that starts with the last letter of the previous word, for example, *apple – elephant – tennis – scientist*, etc.