ESL GAMES

1. **Mystery Box** – Play music, when the music stops, the person with the box reaches their hand into the box and describes the object. Students can guess what the object is. Or play music, when the music stops, the person with the box looks into the box. Students ask 20 questions to determine what is in the box.

2. **A Ship Comes Loaded** - This is a game where you practice words and your memory! Let the students choose a letter, for example A. Now the class is going to say a word, one each, that begins with an A. Start like this: say to the first student "a ship comes loaded". The student answers "with what" and you say "with apples". Then the student continues to say to the next one in the class "a ship comes loaded"...he/she answers "with what"...the student says "with apples and apes" for example. And then it continues like that "forever". The students have to remember what words have been said and they have to come up with a new word beginning with the letter that they decided to play with.

3. **Four Corners** - The teacher divides the room into four corners: agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and disagree. Then the teacher makes a statement like "Movie stars deserve to be paid huge sums of money for what they do." The students move to the corner that best depicts how they feel about the statement. The students in each corner have a few minutes to discuss why they feel this way and then their group presents. Depending on the type of statement made by the teacher, this game can be very serious, very funny, very political etc.

4. **Hangman** – A twist - Place on the board the number of blanks for one word (eg "police officer"). Provide clues about the word such as appearance, duties, associated accessories, etc... This requires the students know not only the word but also what it means. Works best with occupations, locations, animals, etc.

5. **Emotional Gestures** - This is a gesture game using previously learned verbs and emotions. Have two envelopes, one is verbs and one is emotions. Students take one card from each envelope and must perform the gesture. It is simple and very amusing. The students in the audience must guess what the emotion is and what the action is. Examples: angry /swimming, happy /hair brushing, sleepy /dancing afraid/cleaning, surprised /playing a guitar.

6. **Boggle** - What you need is a board, two teams, and some way to choose a random selection of letters. Get the students to select the letters and write them on the board. Break the class into two teams. Assign a point system based on the length of the words they can spell using the selected letters. Depending on the level of the class you may want to make three or even four letter words worth 0 points. Use 1 point for 3 and 4 letter words, 2 for five letter words and 3 for 6 or more. Give bonus points for a really long word. The teams take turn spelling words. A wrong spelling or a duplicate word and the team loses its turn. Get the teams to use the word in a sentence just to make sure that they know the meaning. (Extra points for creative sentences!)

7. **Jeopardy** - Put the categories on the board and assign points to each category of questions ranging from 100 to 500 or 1000 depending on the level of the class and the time available. The categories can be verb tenses, noun plurals, opposites, homonyms, spelling, geography and mathematics. Divide the students into teams and continue by allowing the team to choose a category and dollar amount. If they answer the question correctly, the team receives the dollar amount. If they do not answer the question correctly, the other team gets the opportunity to answer.

**Additional Topics (can be played orally):** Name 3: Name 3 flowers, Name 3 cities in Canada; What's Next: lmn_ , 3 6 9 __ , July, August, September... Cities: Where is the Eiffel Tower? What is the capital of Mexico? Where am I from? "Where is the leaning
tower of Pisa?" Countries: Bangkok is the largest city in what country? What country hosted the 1988 Olympic Games? Responses: Achoo (Bless you) Here you are (Thank you)"Let's not go there." (Why not?)

8. **Pictionary** - Divide the class into teams. In turn, a member from each team comes to the board. Give the student a vocabulary word either orally or in writing. Then the student has 1 minute to draw the word. The first person who shouts out the correct answer wins.

9. **Packing List Game** – Begin the activity with the following written on the board: "I'm going to New York City, and I'm going to bring..." After repeating the statement on the board to the class, the teacher pauses, and then writes in an object from a pre-selected category that is unknown to the students. "Things people wear" is a good place to start. The teacher might complete the sentence with "sunglasses" writing the word on the board as he/she produces the object or flashcard representation of the object. Next, the teacher asks the class for input regarding what to bring: "What else do we need to bring on this trip? Anybody...?" Students take turns indicating what they would bring on the trip. If a student says they will bring an object that fits with the selected category, the teacher adds it to the emerging list on the board. If the object does not fit, the teacher says: "No, we're not going to pack that." or "I'm sorry, we don't need _____ for this trip." The activity gets more and more engaging as students think of all kinds of clever ways of categorizing things to bring on the trip, for example: objects that begin with the letter "l" or things that come in pairs or groups, like shoes or grapes, etc.

10. **The Lying Game** - Each student (and Instructor) has to create three lies about themselves and one truth. A grid is placed on the board with the student’s names in rows going across, and lies/truth 1 to 4 going down. Students then tell their 4 facts. After the entire grid is filled, the "Interrogation phase" begins. The students, one by one, ask questions to the subject, trying to discover whether he/she is lying or not. It requires focused listening skills and lying well requires a high level of speaking ability.

11. **Post it on your Forehead** - You need a stack of small post-it notes. On each one (one for each student), write the name of a famous person or character. Get the students to sit in small groups (for a shorter game) or one big circle (for a longer and funnier game). Then go round and stick a post-it note to everyone's forehead. They have to guess the name on their own note using a 20 Questions format (yes/no questions, a yes answer gets you another question, a no answer means the next person starts asking). Use a variety of names: Disney characters, famous politicians, movie & pop stars, international sports figures (i.e. Beckham, Ronaldo) and religious figures are all good.

12. **Word Chain** - Divide the classroom into teams. Divide the chalkboard into the amount of teams. Have one student from each team come up to the chalkboard and have them write a word. The next student from their team comes up and writes another word that begins with the same letter as the ending letter of the previous word. Give a time limit of about 2-5 minutes. The team with the most words spelled correctly wins! Ie. Egg, gold, dab, bowl, etc. Make it harder: only 4 letter words, or categories. Food: egg, grapes, strawberry, etc.

13. **Who Gets the Goodies – Role Playing Game** - Basic idea: Agatha Rich, a wealthy businesswoman, has just died. She did not leave any details as to who gets everything in her estate. All her friends, relatives, and basically anyone who even knew her for a day, are going to have a meeting with her lawyer (the teacher) to convince him/her that they should get the good. Preparation: Write up a list of what is included in Agatha's estate. i.e. a cottage in the Rocky Mountains, a mink coat, a luxury yacht, a house in Spain, a mansion...about 14 things on the list. Provide each student with a character card that shows how he or she knows Agatha. (i.e.
sister, son, ex-husband 2, neighbour, magazine reporter, business partner, crazy man from down the street who is convinced Agatha loved him (but just never said so)

Ask the students to be prepared to answer some of the following questions: How are you related to Agatha? What is your name? Where do you live? Where do you work? Why do you deserve the things you want from Agatha's estate? What did you do for Agatha in the past? What did you do for her recently? Basically, they are creating a character with a whole story, and not just a name. I allowed them to write out their created information on a piece of paper and bring it to the meeting.

On the day of the "meeting" go over the items from the estate with the students. Have them check off three or four items that they want. Then the fun begins.

The lawyer can ask the questions that were covered in the preparation with the students, but don't limit it to that! Throw in some other questions to make them think. (ie. How much money do you make a year? Is Agatha's sister telling the truth? The other characters can jump in any time they want to comment on what someone has said. At the end of the meeting, the lawyer will have to make his decision as to who gets what. May take a while!

Expansion:
Instead of playing as individuals, have the students play in groups of 3-4. Each group represents a charity that Agatha had supported during her lifetime. They have to present their group to the lawyer, tell why Agatha had supported them, and talk about what they would do with the items in the estate if they received them. In that case, the lawyer is free to split up the estate, or give it all to one charity.

Do your best to make it seem like the real situation. If you really want to get things moving, show a few students a "picture" of what Agatha looked like during her life. During the meeting, the lawyer can ask people what they remember about Agatha. It's pretty funny when only some of them really know what the picture looks like, and leads to some great conversations!

14. **Balderdash** – This game requires the students to create their own definitions for unknown vocabulary. It can be played in small groups with appointed secretaries to write. The teacher hands out slips of paper or 3X5 cards with a word/expression written, (perhaps phonemic spelling, too) and the part of speech ("grouchy" -- adjective). The word should be one that the students will not know, and every student gets the same word. Individually, students write a definition for that word on their slip of paper (it can be tame or completely outrageous) and pass it back to the teacher. The teacher silently reads through definitions to check for glaring grammar mistakes and to make sure it's legible. Then once all the definitions have been completed, the teacher reads each definition aloud for the students. Included somewhere in the pile of definitions is the *real* definition which the teacher has written. After listening to all the definitions, students must vote for the definition they believe is the correct one. Students score one point form - a) choosing the correct definition, b) each vote that their own definition receives, c) writing a correct definition for the word. After the votes have been tallied and the true definition revealed, reinforce the correct definition with some examples in context. Use this game as a change of pace between activities (i.e. handing out just one word to the class each day, keeping a scorecard throughout the week or month) or make a meal of it and do several words in one class period.

15. **Fun with Idioms** - Make a list of idioms the students are unlikely to know (for example: "Over my dead body", "Bite the bullet", "Cut it out" etc.). Write each phrase on a small piece of paper. Divide your class into teams of two and have each team pick one piece of paper. The students then write a short dialogue using their phrase. Have them perform their dialogues and then explain the real meaning of the idiom. It's entertaining for the students and the teacher to hear how the idioms are used (usually incorrectly).
16. **Hot Seat** - With hot-seat, a student seats with his/her back to the board or to the teacher. The teacher displays a word or a flash card. Other students describe what is on the card to enable the students to guess what it is. For higher-level students teachers can make hot-seat more challenging by writing a number of TABOO Word’s on the board. For example if a teacher shows the students a flash card of say a HAIRDRESSER. Taboo words could be words like CUT & HAIR. Students cannot use these two words to describe hairdresser. This forces the students to find other ways of describing the word without the taboo words. Taboo words are most often words that can easily give away the word on the flashcard.

17. **Family Feud** – Arrange the group into teams. Ask for the top 5 answers.

18. **Word Volleyball** - Speaking and vocabulary practicing. Requires: skip rope, whistle, and one balloon or more just in case. Every time a student touches the ball, s/he must say a word or sentence. Divide students into teams. One team serves. He/she defines the topic. The other side must hit the ball three times, each time mentioning a word related to the topic, before sending the ball back to the other side. No word can be repeated. This continues until the ball hits the ground, goes out of bounds or is hit more than three times. Points are awarded to the serving side or service moves to the other side.

19. **Dice Game** - The teacher brings a large soft dice to the classroom. Students sit in a circle and take turns rolling the dice. The student who rolls the die uses the number that shows up on the die to say some things about him/herself. For example, if the number 2 shows up, the student will have to say two things about him/herself. Another variation would be for the student to ask the class the number of questions according to what number shows up on the die. If you are practicing a grammar focus, you could ask the student to make the number of sentences according to a particular grammar point. For example, let’s say you were teaching the simple past tense, you could ask the student to make the number of sentences using the simple past-asking him or her to say the number of things s/he did yesterday, last year, last summer etc. Students take turns rolling the dice.

20. **Stick a Card - Word Guessing Game:** The teacher splits the class into two teams and calls up a student from one team to the front of the class. The teacher sticks a card or word on the student’s back. Make sure the other students sitting down know what is on the student’s back, but not the student standing. The student standing has to ask the others many questions to guess what is stuck on his/her back. Students can help him/her guess the word by giving him/her only verbal clues, but only after the student standing has asked a question. For example if the word PIG was stuck behind a student’s back, s/he should ask questions like this: “Is it a person?” “Is it an animal?” Then the class says, “Yes it is an animal.” The student standing can follow up to ask, “Is it a farm animal?” The student asks questions until s/he has guessed the word correctly and scores a point for his/her team.

21. **Riddles** -

22. **Scrabble** –

23. **Word Search** –

24. **Crossword Puzzles** –

25. **Me Too** -