

TOEIC(R) Games and Activities

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TOEIC® Games and Activities

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Japanese universities are realizing their responsibility to help students get their best scores on the TOEIC Test. In many companies job seekers' TOEIC scores can determine whether they are hired.

In 2017 the Educational Testing Service issued a new style of TOEIC Test which lengthened the more difficult parts of the test and shortened the easier ones. At around the same time the Japanese government reported yet another decline in the English competency level of Japanese junior high school students as measured by standardized tests (Aoki). The challenge of significantly raising university students' TOEIC scores has probably never been greater.

As well as fostering creativity, classroom games have been shown to improve students' concentration and motivation to learn, even among lower level students (Boyle). As far as listening games, Rost claims that the *active listening* resulting from game playing can heighten students' engagement and performance on cognitive and affective activities. According to Kleinman, using games in the university classroom has the potential to accelerate learning and create a social environment where good performance is valued.

The following games have been adapted to TOEIC instruction and are classroom tested. The particular parts of the TOEIC or skills that these games support are indicated each time. The games are offered for teachers hoping to enrich and enliven their TOEIC instruction as well as increase their students' scores.

List of Games and Activities

1. Parts of speech and photographs
2. Running dictation

3. Card matching
4. Strip talks
5. Pair sheets
6. Board relay
7. Slap
8. Bingo

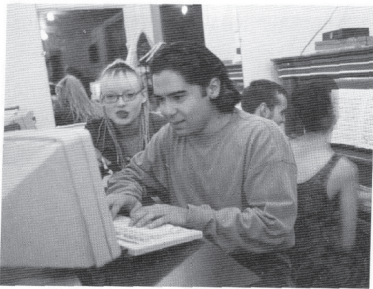
Activity 1. Parts of Speech and Photographs

Supports: TOEIC Part 1. Photographs

On the actual TOEIC test students see a photo and select the best of four statements about it.

Objectives:

1. Predicting vocabulary
2. Recognizing parts of speech



| Nouns | Verbs |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| | 4. |

From Trew, *Tactics for the TOEIC*®, p.9.

Preparation:

1. Copy a set of 5 to 10 TOEIC-style photos with a box for completion at the right of each picture.
2. Prepare one set of photos for each group of three students. For example, for 30 students you would need 10 sets of 5-10 photos with the boxes for completion.

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Procedure:

1. Divide students into groups of three. One student, the best speller, should write, but all three should be contributing answers. Seat groups apart from other groups, so that they are less likely to hear each other's answers.
2. Tell students that they must look at the photos and complete the blanks with words that could be used to describe what they see, with a specified number of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs indicated in the box.
3. Limit the time. One way is to announce that the fastest group with the most correct answers will receive the most points.
4. Use a graduated point system. That is, the group that finishes earliest and has the highest number of correct answers (correct parts of speech, correct spelling) gets 10 bonus points for each student. The group that ranks second gets 9 bonus points per student. Third best gets 8 points, down to the last two groups, who will also be competing for points. Make sure that there is competition for points down to the very last groups.

Warning:

1. Order the photos differently for each group. Otherwise, students may hear other groups' answers and simply copy them. This activity is best with smaller groups in bigger rooms.
2. As a rule, I do not do many photo activities since this section on the TOEIC is worth so few points. However, parts of speech exercises are valuable because they also contribute to better performance on Part 5. Sentence Completion and Part 6. Text Completion.

Activity 2. Running Dictation

Supports: TOEIC Part 2. Question-Response

On the actual TOEIC test students listen to a question and then choose the best answer from among three responses.

TOEIC Part 3. Conversations

On the actual test students listen to conversations between two speakers. They are presented with three follow-up questions and must select the best answer from among four choices.

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Objectives:

1. General: Developing students' skill at recognizing the best response to questions and distinguishing among different question words.
2. Specific: Giving students prior practice with difficult Part 2 and Part 3 exercises that will follow later in your lesson.

Preparation:

1. Locate 5-10 of the most difficult question/answer exchanges from the Part 2 and Part 3 practice drills that your students will be doing later in the lesson. Write the questions on one set of strips and the answers on another set of strips. I often use different colors of paper, one color for questions and a different color for answers.
2. Put the two sets of strips on opposite sides of the classroom (questions on one side, answers on the other) in places where students cannot read them at their seats. This may require posting the strips outside the classroom doors.

Procedure:

1. Pre-teach any difficult vocabulary in this exercise.
2. Divide students into groups of three, two runners and one secretary. If one or two students remain after groups have been formed, those students will have to do the activity without a secretary and write down the sentences at their desks after memorizing them.
3. Give each secretary a blank sheet of paper with a line running down the center. The left side is for writing questions and the right side is for recording answers.
4. Explain the activity. One runner will hurry to the question strips, choose a strip, memorize it, return to the secretary and recite the memorized words, so that they can be written down. The other runner will follow the same procedure with the answers. Secretaries must write every word that they hear.
5. After the secretaries have finished all the writing, they must match questions to answers. The runners can help.
6. The group that finishes first with the fewest mistakes (spelling, completeness, matching) receives the most bonus points. Use a graduated scale to award points to each group.

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Warning:

1. This activity can become dangerous if not planned well. Be sure that there is enough space for students to run without knocking each other down.
2. For larger groups prepare two sets of questions and answers. Post one set of questions and answers at the front of the room and a second set of questions and answers at the back of the room. Half the groups will then work in front and the other half in back. To keep track of who finishes first, second, third, etc., tell students a number (1, 2, 3, etc.) to write on their papers (1 for 1st, 2 for 2nd, etc.) as they finish. It is possible for two or more groups to finish at the same time and to write the same number. Correct completed work during the game as time allows.
3. Be sure to seat students far enough away from the questions and answers. Otherwise, secretaries will simply copy everything they see.
4. Do not let runners stand in front of the questions/answers and shout them to the secretaries. They must walk back to the secretaries and whisper.
5. Runners may not take pencils/pens to the question/answer area. They must memorize their words, not copy them.

Activity 3. Card Matching

Supports: TOEIC Part 2. Question-Response and Part 3. Conversations

Objectives: Same as for Activity 2

Preparation:

1. Type 8-10 of the most difficult question/answer exchanges from the practice drills which the students will do later in the lesson. Cut up the dialogs into question and answer parts.
2. Put the individual questions on cards of one color. Put the individual answers on cards of a different color. Make a set of cards, questions and answers, for every six students in class.

Procedure:

1. Divide students into teams of about three. Each team of three will play another team of

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three, with every team member taking regular turns. Members of the same team can collaborate to score better points.

2. Put teams on opposite sides of tables or desks that are pushed together. Have students lay out the cards face down in two groups, question group and answer group.
3. Use *jan-ken-pon* or another quick method to decide who plays first. The first player turns over a question card and reads it aloud, then turns over an answer card and reads out loud. If the question and answer match, the player takes the two cards and plays again. If there is no match, the player turns the cards over and the next person plays.
4. Award points to the teams for each correct pair.

Warning:

1. Making the materials for this game takes a lot of time because many sets of cards are required. Be sure to allow for extra preparation time.
2. If possible, use cards of one color for questions and cards of another color for answers. For card set 1, write *1* on the back of every card, questions and answers. For card set 2, write *2*. This will allow you to speedily sort cards into groups if they become mixed up.
3. Lower students can easily become overwhelmed if there are too many cards. Experiment and see how many cards are a good number for your classes.
4. Insist that students read the two cards aloud each time. This is a key point for learning. Many students stop reading aloud early in the game.
5. Cards placed at different angles are often easier to remember than cards in tidy rows.
6. This game can also be used to match vocabulary and definitions.

Activity 4: Strip Talks

Supports: TOEIC Part 4. Announcements

On the actual test students listen to 10 different talks. After each talk they answer three follow-up questions, selecting the best answer from among four choices. This is probably the most difficult listening section because of the specialized vocabulary and the speed and length of the announcements.

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Objectives:

1. General: Getting students to recognize the typical location of content in announcements and the links between ideas.
2. Specific: Giving students prior practice with a difficult Part 4 exercise.

Preparation:

1. Choose difficult practice exercises from TOEIC Part 4 that you will do later in the lesson.
2. Separately type up the sentences from this announcement but change the order. For example, type up sentence 4 first, sentence 7 next, sentence 1 third, etc.
3. Make copies of your typing. You will need at least one sheet for every group of three students in your class. Cut each sentence into a separate strip.
4. Get a set of envelopes and put one set of the cut strips in each envelope.
5. Prepare an answer paper (a copy of the sentences in correct order) so students can check their work.

Procedure:

1. Pre-teach any difficult vocabulary in this exercise.
2. Divide students into groups of three and move group members close together. Give each group an envelope.
3. Explain the activity. Group members will work together to put the strips in correct speaking order.
4. Tell the students that the group finishing first with the most correctly ordered sentences will get the highest number of points, later groups fewer points.
5. Tell groups to raise their hands after finishing.
6. Shout "Go!" to start the activity.
7. Give a numbered answer paper (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) to each group upon finishing. Award points using a graduated point scale. Groups finishing at roughly the same time can be given the same number of points.

Warning:

1. You will probably have to rely on students to report any errors that they made. Most students will be honest. Nevertheless, be very observant during the correction stage of this exercise to discourage cheating.

Activity 5: Pair Sheets

Supports: TOEIC Part 5. Sentences Completion

On the actual test students choose the best words to complete sentences. This is primarily a test of grammar and word choice.

Objectives:

1. General: Rapid recall of previously learned English grammar and usage.
2. Specific: Practice with the grammar and usage patterns that will appear in this day's lesson.

Preparation:

1. Rather than having students work independently through long, single sentence drills, create partner exercises using pair sheet. Use a numbered set of incomplete sentences. Put the same exercise on the front and back of one paper. Write A at the top of one side and B at the top of the other. On Side A complete the answers for the even numbered sentences. On Side B complete the answers for the odd numbered sentences.

Ⓐ

A 1. I met my friend Howard _____ chance _____ the lobby of the Raffles Hotel _____ Singapore.

B 2. There's a phone number in the newspaper that we can call for more information.

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Ⓑ

- A 1. I met my friend Howard by chance in the lobby of the Raffles Hotel _____ Singapore.
- B 2. There's a phone number _____ the newspaper that we can call _____ more information.

From Rogers, *Reading Guide to the TOEIC® Test*, p.42.

2. Divide students into groups of two, assign A and B roles and distribute papers, making sure each student looks only at his own side, A or B.
3. Seat students, so they will not hear the answers of other groups. If this is impossible, you can ask half the groups to start with the last sentence and work backwards, so the first sentence on the paper is completed last.
4. Explain the directions. Each student needs to read the incomplete sentences on his paper and complete the answers. Taking turns, Student A will read the odd sentences, B the even ones. The listening partner will check his partner's production. If the answering partner is correct, the listening partner will say "OK." If the answering partner makes a mistake, the listening partner will say "Oh-oh" (polite indication that something is wrong) and the answering partner must try again. If the answering partner does not give the correct answer the second time, the listening partner will supply the answer.

Warning:

1. Most students are cooperative about looking only at their own side of the paper. If someone is deliberately uncooperative about this, take his paper away and have him sit silently. If you tolerate cheating, it will spread to other groups and this activity will be useless.
2. If possible, pair students of similar levels. This exercise works best when students feel a sense of competition with their partners. Pair exercises also lessen the stigma of making errors, since only one person hears them, not the whole class.

Activity 6: Board Relay

Supports: TOEIC Part 5. Sentence Completion

Objectives: Same as for Pair Exercises above

Preparation:

1. Use a typed set of sentences for completion, like the sentences used in the Pair Exercise above. This format works well for sentences requiring the student to supply prepositions. These sentences should test the grammar or word choices presented in past lessons or to be met later in this day's lesson.
2. Cut the sentences into separate strips, so that they can be shown individually on the OHC.
3. Divide students into teams, about four members per team if possible. Seat each team in a row, one sitting immediately behind the other. Have pieces of chalk or board markers at the board for each team's use as well as erasers.

Procedure:

1. Explain the rules of the game.
 - a) The student in the first seat of each team will come to the board and take a marker.
 - b) The teacher will show an incomplete sentence on the OHC.
 - c) Students must write the missing word on the board.
 - d) The first student to correctly write the word on the board earns a point for every member of his team.
 - e) After play, students erase and sit down. The next seated students take their place.
2. Play so that every student gets a turn.

Warnings:

1. The sentences used for this game should all require the same part of speech, all prepositions or all pronouns, for example. Otherwise, the game is too confusing.
2. It is okay for team members to shout out answers to members at the board. Competition is heightened, and students may remember answers better.

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3. Keep a tally of the points for each group on the board during the game. If you make mistakes in assigning points, the students will help you correct them.
4. This game is best played fast. If students are too slow or just don't seem interested, end the game early and try it another day.
5. A good source of grammar drills is Bruce Rogers' text, *Reading Guide to the TOEIC Test*, but be selective. This is a high intermediate text. Another source is Folse's *101 Clear Grammar Tests*.

Activity 7: Fly Swatter Slap

Supports: TOEIC Part 7. Longer Readings

In the actual test Part 7 contains longer readings and non-text materials, usually related to business. Students scan a reading and select one of four choices each time to answer questions.

Objectives:

1. Vocabulary review. This activity works well to review the meanings of words from the previous lesson.
2. It can also be used as a second vocabulary exercise if the teacher feels the students need more work with these words before tackling the day's reading exercises.

Preparation:

1. Write the target vocabulary, about 12-15 words, in large black letters on strips of light cardboard. Use magnets or magnetized strips on the back of the cardboard to attach the strips to the board.
2. Type up a list of the vocabulary words with their meanings.
3. For your use, cut the list into strips with one vocabulary word and its meaning on each slip. This will allow you to more easily work with the words in random order. Put the slips in a small bag for use in class.
4. Bring one fly swatter for each student group or for every 4-5 students.

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Procedure:

1. Divide the entire class into teams with roughly the same number of students per team.
2. Seat each team in one row, one person behind the other, just like the seating for the Board Relay.
3. Give a fly swatter to the first seated member of each group and explain directions.
 - a) Each student with a swatter will come to the board.
 - b) The teacher will draw a slip from the bag and read the meaning of one of the words.
 - c) Students should find the word on the board and cover it with their swatter. The student who swats the correct word first earns a point for his group.
 - d) After playing, students give their swatters to the team member behind them who will play next.

Warning:

1. This game requires a certain amount of self-control. Warn students not to hit others with the swatters. If anyone breaks the rules, their team may no longer play and must sit out the rest of the game.
2. Keep track of team scores on the board so students can correct you if you make mistakes.
3. This game works best if students have spent some time studying the words beforehand. I sometimes use it as a substitute for a weekly vocabulary test or as a review activity before a final test.
4. Buy fly swatters during warm weather months. They are very difficult to find in December.

Activity 8: Bingo

Supports: TOEIC Part 7: Longer Readings

Objectives: Same as for Activity 7

Preparation:

1. For student use, prepare a handout of the vocabulary for review, about 25 words, no less

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than 20.

2. Copy a bingo sheet of the appropriate size for each student. If you wish, you can copy the sheet both on the front and back side of the paper to allow for two games.
3. Prepare markers (to cover words called) if you need them. For small classes I bring small bags of popcorn kernels to use as markers. For large groups I bring old paper, and students tear the paper into small pieces for markers.

Procedure:

1. Pass out the vocabulary lists and bingo sheets.
2. Students copy words at random onto their empty bingo boxes, one vocabulary word per box.
3. Make sure that all students have markers.
4. Briefly explain directions.
 - a) The teacher will pull a slip out of her bag and read the meaning of the word.
 - b) Students will search their cards for the vocabulary word matching this meaning. If they have it, they will cover that box with a marker.
 - c) Once a student has covered an entire row of words with markers, he should shout "Bingo!" and read the words to the teacher.
 - d) Confirm the words by displaying the word slips on the OHC.
 - e) Award points to winners.

Warning:

1. Some students take a great deal of time to complete their cards, forcing others to wait. Set a time limit for producing cards to avoid this problem.
2. This game works best as a review activity for previously learned vocabulary. Avoid playing bingo with vocabulary introduced the same day. Students will probably not be able to remember meanings.
3. Standard bingo sheets contain 25 boxes, but you may not have quite enough vocabulary. In such cases you can have students write a few words twice.

Conclusion:

1. Advice:

- a) Use activities and content that will help students do better on the TOEIC drills for that day. Do not play games simply to kill time or just to have fun.
- b) Investigate additional activities recommended by colleagues or EFL teacher websites and create your own games. Many activities used in grammar and reading classes can also be used in TOEIC courses.

2. Warnings:

- a) Remember to allow enough time for game preparation. The first time you prepare for a game, you may need even more preparation time than for a regular lesson.
- b) Don't overuse one activity or use too many activities in one class. The students will become bored.

3. Follow-up

(possible homework websites)

a) ELLLO

Hundreds of short interviews of foreigners living in Tokyo, followed by comprehension questions, answer keys and scripts. Interviews are identified by nationality of foreign speaker and topic but not by level. Useful practice for improving comprehension of various accents found on the TOEIC. Suitable for lower level learners.

b) ENGLISH-TEST.NET

Hundreds of authentic TOEIC test practice materials for each part of the test, followed by answer keys and scripts. High intermediate level.

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