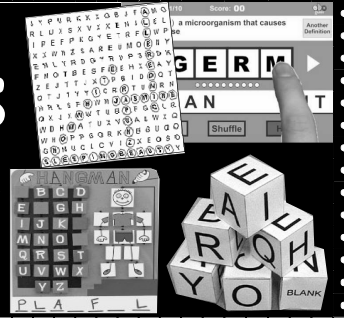
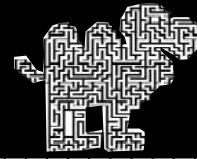


V

vē = /vi^y/

Word Puzzles & Games

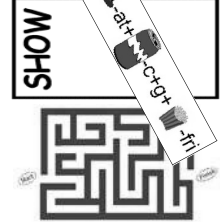
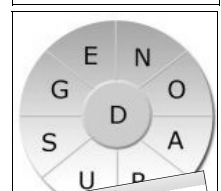
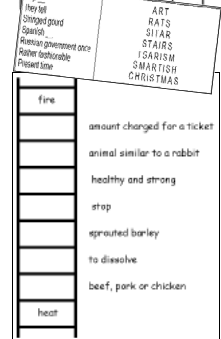
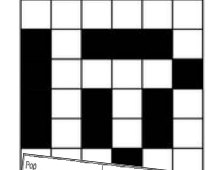
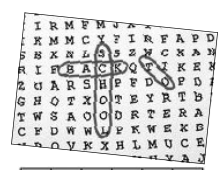


Once language-learners are well on their way to grasping essential phonics/spelling patterns, principles, and rules while acquiring vocabulary, lessons and activities used to review or anchor material can incorporate the engaging motivation, cooperation, and competition of *word puzzles* and *games*.

The best-known formats for pencil-and-paper or electronic vocabulary *puzzles* (samples of which appear on pages 136-140 of *Activity Ideas 5*) are *Word Searches*; *Crosswords*; *Letter-Ladders & Pyramids*, *Word-Wheels* or *Letter-Hubs*; *(Scrambled) Word Jumbles/Anagrams*, *Rebuses*/*Pictograms*, and *Mazes*. In their pedagogical form, these are most often organized according to meaning categories of their content—*People*, *Places*, *Things*, *Activities*, *Adjectives*; *Food*, *Work*, *Health*, *Holidays*, *Sports*, etc. Even more efficient and effective for phonics/spelling instruction, however, might be *puzzle-solution* items chosen according to the *patterns*, *principles*, and *spelling rules* they illustrate—most likely, *Initial & Final Consonants & Blends*; *Vowel Sounds & Spellings*, *Rimes* or *Rhyming-Words*; *Syllables*; *Word Parts (Roots & Affixes)*; *Homographs & Homophones*; *Compounds*.

Educational word puzzles are downloadable from sites like esl-galaxy.com/, puzzle-club.com/, parenting-our-kids.com/word-puzzles-for-kids. *Puzzle generators* into which participants *input* items are also easy to find—at discovery.education.com/puzzlemaker/, edubakery.com/, theteacherscorner.net/printable-worksheets/make-your-own, puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com, and many other web addresses.

And on pages 179-185 are instructions, samples, and even templates for creating custom-designed word puzzles that target phonics/spelling content.



Slow Down or Speed Up? Multi-Level Pointers



To help learners gain confidence and enthusiasm about letter manipulation in puzzle form, *Word Searches*, *Criss-Crosses*, *Missing-Letters*, *Scrambled Words*, and *Rebuses* designed for young or new readers and spellers should contain only manageable numbers of relatively common, familiar, useful, and interesting items.

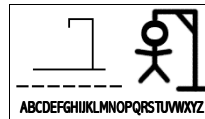
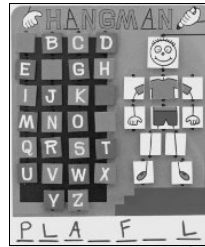
Organized into topics or themes, such materials are readily available not only online but also in reproducible books for language students of various ages and proficiency levels—like Authors & Editors' *Picture This (Too)!* and *Ways with Words*: ISBNs 978-0-9627878-0-5, -1-2; 978-1891077-27-2.

Even more useful in the teaching/learning, review, and anchoring of phonics/spelling content may be puzzles designed to target groups of sounds/ letters or phonics patterns and spelling rules—such as those included in spelling texts. See A & E's *Basic/Practical Spelling Workbooks*, ISBNs 978-1-891077-87-6 and -88-3.

Many more pedagogically productive puzzles of an even larger variety of types will be available in A & E's *Phonic Spelling Puzzle Tear-Off Pad*, ISBN: 978-1-934637-TBA.

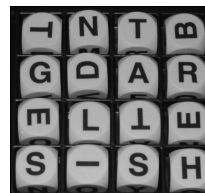
Competitive word *games* differ from puzzles in that they are oral and manipulative (instead of only paper-and-pencil) and can include game pieces and procedures. Here are brief instructions for some well-known pastimes that work well in language education:

1. **Guess-the-Item.** In a classic vocabulary-guessing game called *Hangman* (an example of which is the TV game-show *Wheel of Fortune*), one or more players try to discover a *mystery item* by spelling it out one letter at a time. The “puzzle solution” is represented by the appropriate number of blanks or boxes. In turn, one or more guessers say a letter. If his/her guess is correct, it is entered into the appropriate space(s). If the proposed letter does *not* appear in the solution, however, that player gets a penalty tally—which may be part of a diagram resembling a hanging figure; so that they don’t repeat it, everyone crosses out (eliminates) that wrong letter from his/her copy of the alphabet. The same or next person makes another guess—until the mystery is solved or the penalties add up to failure.



Many fun puzzles of this kind for language learners are available at <http://www.hangman.no/> or <http://www.manythings.org/hmf/>—and there are templates for creating your own puzzlers on page 186.

2. **Use Letter Cubes.** In the commercial game of *Boggle*, a tray of 16 cubic dice, each with a different letter printed on every side, is shaken until its cubes settle into the grid with their top letters visible. At the same time, all players search for words of over two letters to be formed from adjacent cubes. Until time is called, they quickly jot down these items. Then as each person’s discovered words are read aloud, everyone crosses the items they hear off their lists. Points are based on the lengths of everyone’s remaining words; the player with the highest score wins the round.



Games based on comparable *anagram* principles, entitled *Wordsplay*, *WordTwist*, *Upwords*, and the like, can be played online. Also, letter cubes, cards, or tiles of older games like *Ad-Lib*, *Quiddler*, *Spell 'n' Tell*—or self-made “dice” like those offered on page 187—can be used for a large variety of productive letter-spelling games.

3. **Find Words-in-a-Word.** Players can compete in making new words out of the letters of one long vocabulary item at sites like www.wordplays.com/p/wiw—or game materials created in low-tech form. Competitive motivation comes from timing and scoring procedures.
4. **Have a Spelling Bee.** Based simply on the oral spelling of clearly pronounced items (with given definitions if requested), these (team) competitions can follow long-established rules—or procedures that participants devise. And try sites like www.spellingbeethethegame.com/.

Slow Down or Speed Up? Multi-Level Pointers

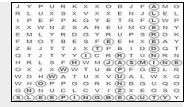


Strategies and tips for success in solving *Word Puzzles* or

winning competitive *Word Games* are offered at sites like www.ehow.com/how_5716127_solve-crossword-puzzles.html, www.ehow.com/how_4423399_solve-word-puzzles.html, [wikipedia.org/wiki/Hangman_\(game\)](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Hangman_(game)), and other addresses that include game titles.

Such “advice” is most useful to language learners when it focuses attention on **phonics/pelling** information, patterns, and rules, such as:

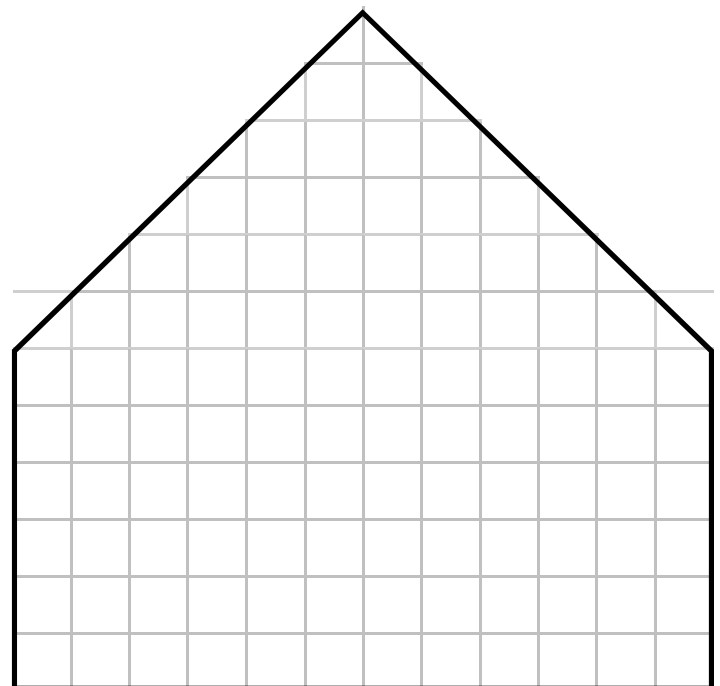
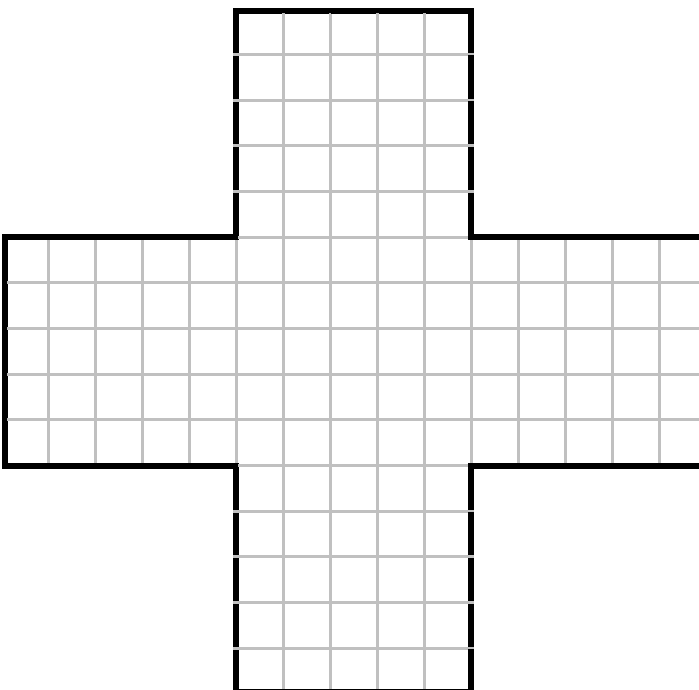
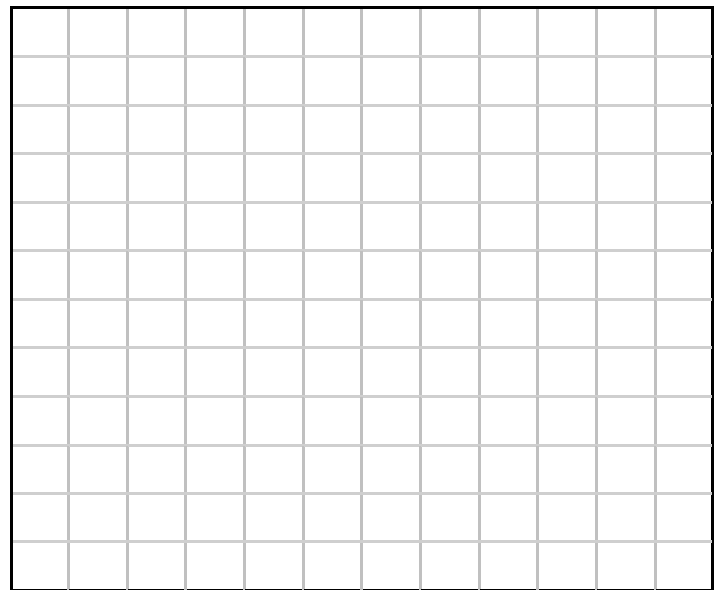
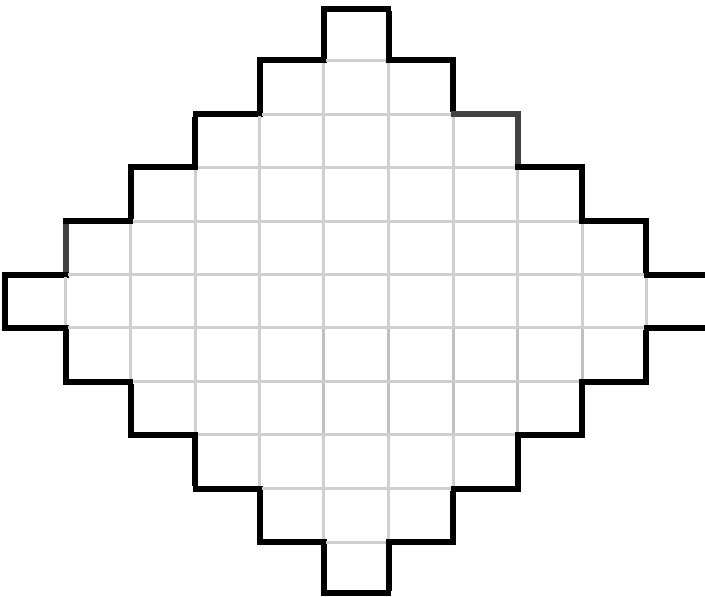
- In order of frequency, the twelve letters that appear most often in English are e, t, a, o, i, n, s, h, r, d, l, u. The five vowel letters a, e, i, o, u are especially common because there *must* be *one or more* of them in every syllable. The other seven are not only common in accented syllables but also in unstressed word parts.
- *Some* letters are likely to appear before or after certain others in specific word positions. To predict spelling combinations and sequences, participants should consider the possibilities of *digraphs* (*ch*, *-ng*, *ph*, *sh*, *th*, *wh-*), *doubled consonants* and *clusters* (*br-*, *bl-*, *-ck*, *dr-*, *-ld*, *-mp*, *-nk*, *sc-*, *-ss*, etc.) *two-letter vowel spellings* (*ay*, *ai*, *ea*, *i-e*, *o-e*, *oo*, *ow*, *oy*, etc.); *common prefixes* (*ex-*, *in-*, *mis-*, *pre-*, *re-*, *un-*, *-able*, *-ian*, *-(e)d*, *-er*, *-ful*, *-ing*, *-(e)s*, etc.); and other spelling conventions such as *qu-*, *-ce*, *-ve*.
- Understanding rules about *doubling*, *dropping final silent -e*, *changing -y- to -i-* before adding endings, and the like will also help.



Instructions for *Word Puzzles & Games*

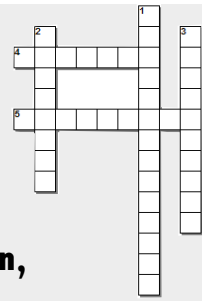
➔ The basic form of a *Word-Search* is a rectangular or specially shaped grid of equally-sized spaces. The vocabulary items that comprise the *puzzle solution* are printed letter-by-letter across and down—and perhaps diagonally. In addition to doing pre-printed *Word Searches* and/or generating puzzles online, participants might want to put useful items to practice into (enlarged) templates like the four shapes below. To do so, first they list items exemplifying patterns/principles relevant to their own instruction. In one of the shapes, they print the letters of those words in adjacent boxes horizontally and vertically, intersecting them when possible. They fill the remaining empty boxes with other letters. Puzzle-solvers receive a list of items to circle along with each *Word-Find Puzzle*.

➔ ➔ If *pictures* and/or *word clues* are substituted for the actual *answers* to locate, the puzzle will be more challenging, interesting, and useful in vocabulary acquisition.





Instructions for *Word Puzzles & Games*



A **Crossword** is a word puzzle in the form of a square or rectangular grid of white and blackened boxes, which separate its answers.

Because these classically shaped creations most often contain items too uncommon or impractical for efficient language instruction, **educational “Criss-Crosses”** are likely to have irregular shapes.

The answers in a **puzzle solution** are to be printed letter-by-letter across and down, beginning in boxes numbered to correspond to given (picture, definition, or fill-in-the-blank) clues. At various levels of difficulty, **crossword puzzles to solve** are everywhere—pre-printed, online, and downloadable. Just type “Easy Crossword Puzzles” in a search-engine box.



In a **Crossword** variation called a **Framework Puzzle**, instead of **figuring out answers**, puzzle-solvers fit given, unnumbered items into a pre-prepared puzzle configuration.

The two puzzles on this page are of that type; the items to print illustrate useful phonics/spelling patterns and rules: **one-syllable words with common vowel spellings** and **homophones**. To complete the puzzles, copy the listed items, one letter per box, in order **Across** and **Down**. After checking your solutions, follow further instructions on the next page.

One-Syllable Words with Common Vowel Spellings

1	a	d	2	d	3		4		5
			e		6		7		
8			c						
			k		9				
10	11		s	12	s			13	
			u	14		15		16	
17							18		
				19				20	

Across	Down
add	rob
ha	oats
spoil	decks
rice	sulk
put	see
boss	as
is	pie
used	dip
stale	out
itch	rich
keep	blur
he	she

Mostly Homophones

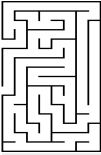
1		2	d							
	4	d	u	e		5		6		
	7			8	w	9				
10								11	e d	12
				13			14		15	
16			17	d			18			
			19	o		20				

Across	Down
add	ad
due	duel
red	dew
ewe	die
sail	sale
urns	earns
you	son
read	dye
one	dual
sun	do

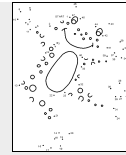
Here are the filled-in solutions to the Framework Puzzles on this page.

Remember: in a Crossword formation, letters in adjacent boxes must spell correct puzzle items in order, across or down.

Also, all answers must share at least one of their letters with at least one other item.



Instructions for *Word Puzzles & Games*



Pencil-and-paper *Mazes*—complex branching pathways through which solvers try to draw a line from *Start* to *Finish*—are most often used to help develop spatial perception, visual acuity, and eye-hand coordination.

Even so, they might also serve as cleverly motivating formats for educational word puzzles.



To make one, go to a *maze-generator* like <http://hereandabove.com/maze/> or <http://hereandabove.com/cgi-bin/mazeform>. After printing or downloading a design of a size and shape that fits pedagogical objectives, print letters (or syllables) that spell words in order into the correct maze pathway—as was done in the samples on pages 60 and 139.

As “detractors” to add challenge, put meaningless letters, letter combinations, and/or other kinds of symbols into the false passageways for users to ignore or bypass.

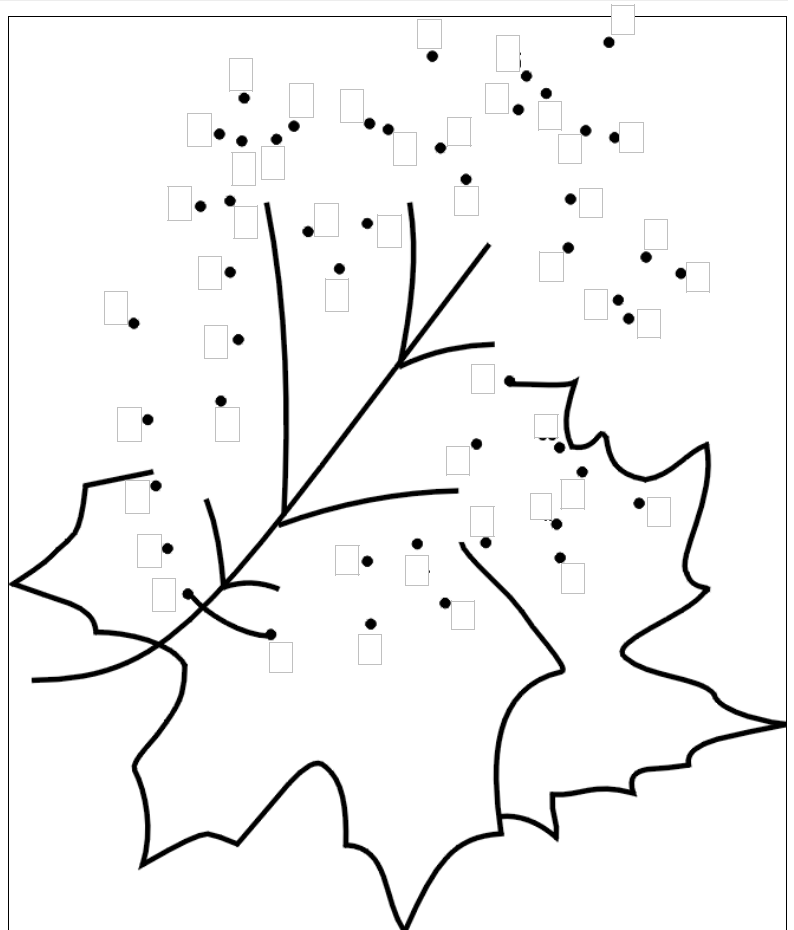
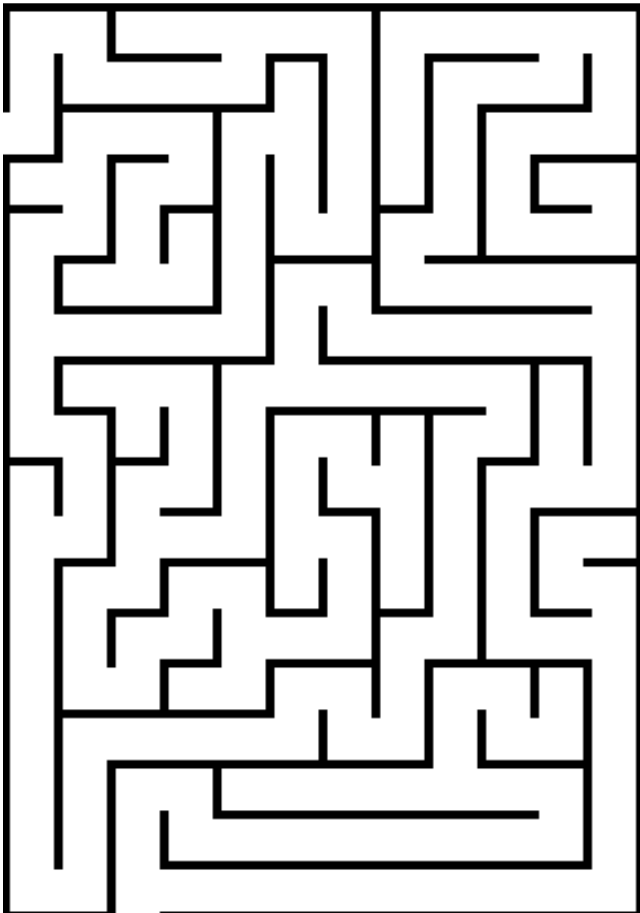
As puzzle solvers draw a direct line (without detours) from *Start* to *Finish*, they can copy down the letters they cross, with spacing between words—or list them for later correction.

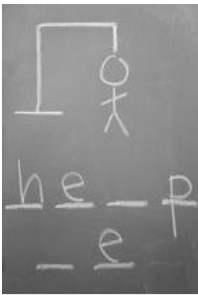


Dot-to-dot Puzzles like those from <http://www.printactivities.com/ConnectTheDots.html> or <http://picturedots.com/make/makePuzzle.html> can be used in similar ways, except

that the numbers must be replaced by letters that spell words. In addition to connecting the dots to make a picture, solvers write down the letters in order to create vocabulary items.

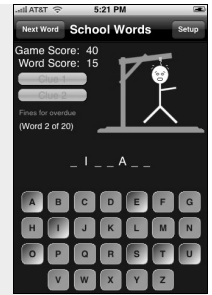
Here are generic *Maze* and *Dot-to-Dot* templates to (enlarge and) fill in with letters in sequence. Make sure they spell useful items typical of phonic/spelling principles.





Instructions for *Word Puzzles & Games*

For those that learn from and enjoy vocabulary-guessing games involving *spelling*, the classic *Hangman* (or *Wheel of Fortune*) game is fun to play online, at sites like www.hangman.no/, www.webhangman.com/, www.playhangmanonline.com//, www.hangman-online.com/.

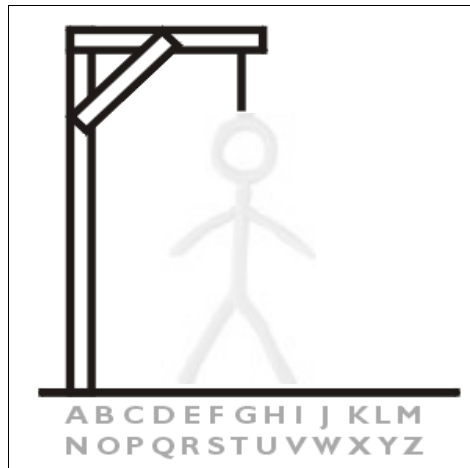
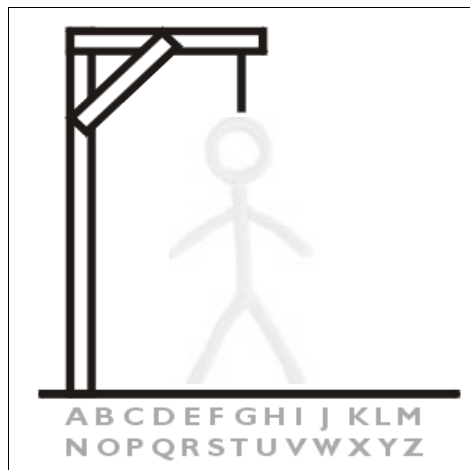


But if you want to play a low-tech version in a learning group, here are some steps to follow: [1] Compile a list of (long) words or phrases relevant to the objectives

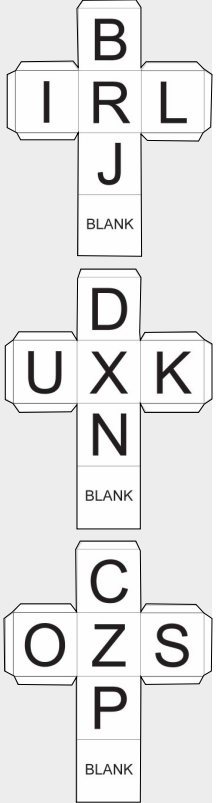
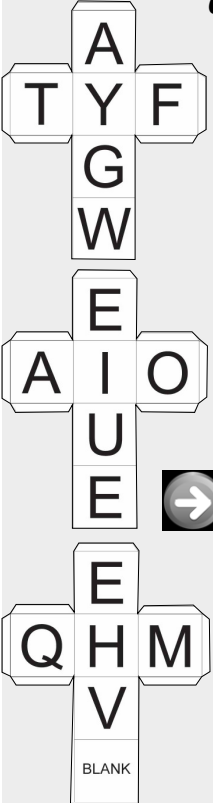
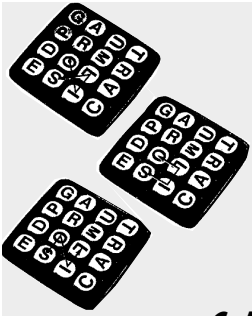
of phonic/spelling instruction. These *Mystery Items* to discover may be in *meaning categories* like *People, Animals, Places, Things, Foods, Activities, Descriptive Words*—or more advanced phrases that are *Idioms, culturally relevant Expressions, Sayings, Song/Movie Titles, etc.*

[2] On a “gallows” diagram below—or an enlarged copy on paper or a board, put the number of blanks that are in the first item to guess. Tell its category or give a general meaning clue.

[3] “Contestants” in turn name a letter. If a guess is correct, print that letter on the one or more lines where it occurs in the item. If it is wrong, begin drawing the “hanging figure” with a circle for its head. To prevent wasted guesses in the future, cross out incorrect letters in the alphabet underneath. [4] Keep printing correct letters in the puzzle when they are said; incorrect guesses result in stick-figure lines being added for the trunk, two arms, two legs, and perhaps other features. [5] If a letter-guesser figures out the *Mystery Item* before the *Hangman* is complete, s/he wins and may present the *next* puzzle to the group. Otherwise, guessers lose the game and need to try again—with an easier or a harder item.



Instructions for *Word Puzzles & Games*



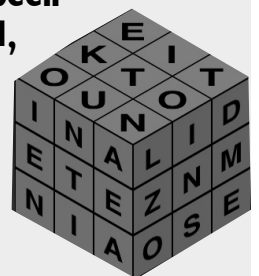
Whether the “game field” is computer-generated or low-tech, the *Letter-Cube (Boggle)* format offers opportunity for experimental letter-combining to enhance word-level phonics/spelling/vocabulary instruction. Variouslly called *Wordsplay, WordTwist, Upwords, Wordup, Isoword, Scramble, or Scrabble Cubes*, the game’s simple rules and short playing times make it useful for a variety of learning objectives and language-proficiency levels.

➔ A game can be played electronically at sites like www.wordplays.com, www.fun-with-words.com/boggle.html, and others. There are even online *solution* generators like www.circlemud.org/~jelson/software/net_boggle. And not only are six-sided “dice” with a letter printed on each surface easily found in (second-hand) commercial games but letter blocks can also be made out of card stock, with or without templates like those from http://www.jasonism.com/english_images/dice1.jpg. Letter tiles like those in *Scrabble* sets—or letter cards laid out face up on a playing surface also work.

➔ ➔ Here are some suggested, generic procedures for educational activities based on *anagram* or other letter-arrangement principles. To prepare, compile a set of *letter cubes, tiles, or small* (perhaps two-sided) *cards* in proportions that reflect their frequency of use in printed language: very common letters like *e, t, a, o, i, n, s, h, r, d, l, u* should appear more often than less common ones like *w, k, v, x, z, j, q* (perhaps combined with *-u* on the same surface). There may even be “Wild Cards”—blank surfaces to be designated as *any* needed letter during game play.



In each round of the game, shuffled letters are laid out—either randomly or in a configuration of 4 x 4, 5 x 5, or 6 x 6 rows and columns. At the same time—making strategic use of their knowledge of *word-family patterns, vowel spellings, word roots/affixes*, and other phonics principles, all players search for words of over two (or three?) letters to be formed from adjacent cubes, tiles, or cards. Within a predetermined length of time, they list these items. Then, as they are read aloud, each competitor crosses the words s/he hears off his/her individual list. The player with the highest score—the most letters used in words that no one else has thought of—wins. (Longer words may even earn extra points.) After the most relevant *sound patterns, spellings*, and other features of the collected answers have been reviewed, the competition can be repeated with identical, similar, comparable, or different procedures and rules.



Some of the same materials can also be used in *other* types of activities, such as *Card or Grid & Board Games*, as suggested in Activity Ideas W and X on pages 189 to 214.



Instructions for *Word Puzzles & Games*



Spelling Bees are a well-known competitive activity for testing and comparing individuals' orthographic abilities—not only in educational situations but also in championship matches.

In the traditional version, a different word is pronounced and defined for each “contestant,” who may ask for repetition and other information before attempting to spell it aloud. Participants that miss an item are eliminated from the contest; the last person left, probably the one who has produced the most correct oral spellings, wins.



Skills to enhance aural/oral spelling abilities can be practiced at www.quia.com/pop/, www.spellingbeethedgame.com/, www.learner.org/interactives/spelling/, and other sites.

Although these tend to rely on *audio* (the clear, syllabic pronunciation of items to spell), some (also) include attention to context, definitions, and how correctly spelled words “look.”

Publicized *Spelling Bees* have drawn criticism for their exclusive focus on *orthography*—often of rarely used, idiosyncratic words—with little attention to productive patterns, meanings, and uses of practical vocabulary in everyday life. Below are suggestions for possibly “kinder” variations that may be more appropriate for language students at different proficiency levels in efficient and effective word-level language lessons.

Cooperative/Competitive Team Spelling Bees. The class divides into two groups of equal ability, each of which compiles a list of vocabulary items for the *other* “team” to spell—perhaps arranged in order of length or perceived difficulty. Teams may line up on opposite sides of the room, standing or sitting in any order they wish—perhaps even *pairs* of partners working together).

The first member of *Team 1* gets a word from *Team 2's List* to spell; consultation with teammates may or may not be permitted. If s/he pronounces and spells the item correctly, s/he remains in place; if s/he cannot do so, s/he is out of the game—and can sit elsewhere to copy all the words presented from then on. (Helpers can print all correct spellings on a board for later review.) The other team gets the next item (from *Team 1's List*)—and so on back and forth from front to back of each line until time is called. The group with the most remaining members wins the competition.

Letter-by-Letter Spelling Bee. Participants are divided into three groups of at least 3 members each. Orally, the first item from a prepared list is presented—with its definition and an example—to *Team A*. Its starting player says the first letter of the word, the next person gives the second letter, and so on until the complete word is spelled correctly. The group wins a point.

If the first given item is spelled *incorrectly*, the second group gets a chance to spell the same word letter by letter. If it succeeds, *Team B* earns two points; but if *those* cooperative spellers *also* make mistakes, *Team C* gets a third chance to spell it correctly—for *three* points. Starting with a different team each round, the game continues in this way until time for the activity runs out.

The group with the most points at the end wins.

adapted from ehow.com/list_5887246_ideas-spelling-bee

Spelling Bee with *Letter Cubes, Tiles, Cards*. Each group of 3 to 5 participants receives a complete set of materials to work with—*blocks, tiles, or cards* displaying alphabet letters in the approximate proportion that they appear in written language.

From a list of important words with useful pedagogical content (targeted *phonics/spelling patterns, principles, rules*), a speaker clearly pronounces an item to spell, probably telling its meaning, using it in context, and saying it again. As fast as they can, the members of each team arrange face-up letters in the appropriate sequence from left to right, indicating when they are done. After spelling the item aloud, the fastest team tallies a number of points equal to the number of groups; the next to finish gets one fewer point, and so on. Any team that fails to spell that item correctly *loses* a point. The game continues in this way until time is called—or one team reaches a predetermined total of points.

X's & O's “Board Game” Written Spelling Bee.

With a big *Tic-Tac-Toe Grid* on a board, learners compete in two groups, designated *X's* and *O's*.

As in other team spelling competitions, one person of each group at a time is given a word to spell on his/her own. Instead of saying the letters *aloud*, however, the first “contestant” chooses, strategically, one of the available nine boxes of the grid to print it in.

If the word is spelled correctly, it is marked with a big *X*, and the next item goes to the second player on the *same* side. If s/he *misspells* it, however, play passes to the opposing side, whose first player gets a chance to correct the item and “win an *O*” in that box. The next word to spell then goes to the *second* group.

As usual in *Tic-Tac-Toe*, three *X's* or *O's* in a row, column, or diagonal constitute a win. Next time, the game might be played on a *Grid* with 16 instead of 9 boxes.

