

# Games 101

By Eva Curlee Doyle

You're conducting a training session that takes several days. On the second morning, you know that you need to review the previous material. But in the past, your review sessions seemed to put people to sleep. Sometimes, participants came late because they thought the review wasn't important. You'd start the second day feeling a little frustrated and discouraged.

But not anymore! You've discovered review games.

Using games as review activities can energize learners and trainers alike. They encourage participation and active learning.

Creating teams for games not only provides a supportive atmosphere, but also puts peer pressure on late arrivals. Games set a positive tone for the day ahead. Perhaps most of all, games are a subtle form of Level 2 evaluation, which gives you, the trainer, feedback on how much knowledge was transferred.

Before you choose your review game, keep in mind a few principles.

Keep the games simple. You don't want to spend a lot of time explaining elaborate rules. Use games that people are familiar with, such as *Jeopardy!*, Tic Tac Toe, and Bingo.

Create teams. Teams provide a supportive atmosphere for shy or reluctant participants and a way for all participants to learn from each other. If they don't know each other, playing in teams is a good way to encourage interaction. If participants do know each other, working in teams can help dispel any stereotypes that co-workers may have formed about each other. It's also a form of peer pressure to get everyone there on time and taking part actively.

Keep the activity under control. Always emphasize the training purpose behind the games. Some people get caught up in the competition and become indignant if another team seems to get a break

in the scoring. Announce in the beginning that you reserve the right to bend the rules as needed to make the review effective.

Use small prizes for motivation. It will amaze you what adults will do for a bag of candy. One caution: Don't give away anything of great value. Even a company pen can turn the focus into a competition instead of a learning experience.

Use the feedback. Games give you immediate feedback on the effectiveness of your previous training session. You know what participants retained so when you begin using new material, you have a better idea of what to emphasize. It's a non-threatening way to conduct a Level 2 evaluation. In addition, a game gets everyone going in the morning, including you, and helps energize the group.

## Let's play!

### 1. Tic Tac Toe

You will need two teams and a set of questions. For two rounds, you'll need a list of 18 to 20 questions and answers. Don't depend on your memory; make sure you write the answers down.

Draw the nine-box Tic Tac Toe square on a whiteboard or flipchart. Ask the first team to pick a box (or "square," as the MC on *Hollywood Squares* calls it). Then, ask the team a question. If it answers correctly,

the team gets an X or O in that square. Then ask the second team a question. If that team gets the answer wrong, the other team is allowed to answer the question and gets the square if it has the right answer.

**Tips:** Two rounds are usually sufficient. If you have a large enough group, you can create a *Hollywood Squares* version of the game, in which nine people serve as the "celebrities" who answer the questions. Then, form the rest of the group into teams to decide whether those answers are correct.

### 2. Bingo

Create a 5-by-5-inch Bingo board on 8.5-by-11-inch sheets of paper, with answers in the squares. Make the space

in the middle of each sheet a free space.

Hand out the Bingo "cards" to the teams. As you ask each question, have the teams find the answer and mark an X in that square. The first team to get five Xs in a row down, across, or diagonally wins.

**Tips:** Be sure to review the questions and answers afterwards. Participants can accidentally mark the wrong item, which might not be apparent until the game is over. If your group's too small to divide into teams, you can still play Bingo to review the material. Because participants are marking their sheets rather than calling out answers, they are less likely to feel put on the spot.

If you don't want everyone to have the same Bingo card, you can make several versions with the same answers but in different squares. That's easy to do on a computer with table formats and cut-and-paste functions.

### 3. Jeopardy!

Create four to six categories, with five questions in each category. Make the questions gradually harder as the dollar value increases. As in the other games, be sure to write down the answers for yourself.

Draw the game board on a flipchart or whiteboard. Write category headings at the top, and give each of the five rows a

value from \$100 to \$500.

Have the first team call out a category and a dollar value. You read the answer, and all teams can respond. You can use kazoos or other noisemakers, or just let people raise their hands.

You call on the first team that rings in. If it answers correctly, add to its score. To encourage participation, don't subtract for wrong answers. The team that answered correctly then chooses another category and dollar value.

Tips: *Jeopardy!* is a good review game for the end of long classes with meaty content. If you have a lot of material to review, you can create a *Double Jeopardy!* round.

*Jeopardy!* is typically the game that brings out the most heated competition, so it's useful to have an assistant in the training room to decide which team responded first and to help keep score. Emphasize at the beginning that the purpose is to review the material, not fight to the death. *Jeopardy!* seems to be the game participants enjoy most.

You can make up games. Draw a board game on a flipchart or whiteboard and on each game space write a different category or activity, such as making up a question for the other team.

Another idea is to create **Twenty Questions** as a PowerPoint slide show. You can use PowerPoint's capability to make a slide that displays first the question and then the answer.

If there is a lot of terminology in the training content, **Hangman** can be especially effective. In fact, almost any childhood game can be reincarnated as a training review activity.

Regardless of which game you do choose, be prepared to hand out the questions and answers. Many participants will want to have that information to use as a reference later.

Some participants look alarmed at first when you announce that the session will include a game, but using teams makes it more appealing. Most training sessions have their dry moments, and most people welcome a chance to engage more actively in the material.

Just keep in mind a few principles:

- ❑ Make the game simple, and keep it under control.
- ❑ Use teams and small prizes to keep the atmosphere supportive and light.
- ❑ Emphasize the learning purpose behind the game, and use it as a feedback

mechanism for yourself.

Most of all, have fun!

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land, for their creative techniques that contributed to this article.

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