

Strategies for Review Games

Are you frustrated by low scores on your tests? Do you give your kids a study guide, but they don't even do it? Do you play the same review game every single time you prep for a test? I think helping your students review content prior to assessment is vital. But too often we aren't being effective with our time. Study guides that are word for word from the test aren't actually assessing our students understanding of the content – instead it becomes a simple memorization activity. For years, I would use the exact same questions on a study guide that was on a test, the kids would score well, but then I would be baffled when they performed poorly on district or state tests. I wasn't truly preparing them to think critically or make connections to the content. It boiled down to my poor review.

Over the course of many years, I have discovered that allowing students to play games prior to a test actually increased my scores – not only for the immediate test, but for the assessments in the future as well. That is because students were actually still learning while they were playing games. *Active review games are essential to student success!*

There are so many different ways to play review games in your class – but to make the most of your time, **follow a few guidelines** –

1. ***Does the review activity include all children at all times?*** Consider for example, the popular "Trashketball". If only 1 or 2 students are playing the game, are the other students still engaged? A better game is one that everyone can participate in the same time. *Small group games hit this target well.* With hexagonal thinking students make connections between people, events and vocabulary terms. "Kaboom" is a simple group game to implement. Take a set of task cards and the Kaboom templates. Students discuss and answer questions while they compete for points against their friends.
2. ***Is the game social?*** Learning is a social event. If your review is social and allows your students to talk to one another, they will actually continue to learn while they are reviewing. This is especially true if you teach teenagers – your students WANT TO TALK! Provide opportunities for them to talk about history!
3. ***Does the game have an element of competition?*** Points, fake or real, can engage students. If you are using small groups to review, it will allow your weaker students to also have an opportunity to shine. Add points to almost any game you are playing. The points could be fake, but the engagement is real!

4. *Is it new or different?* Novelty is important for students – they are Kahooted out! If every teacher is doing the same type of review and they have seen the game multiple times, the game loses its effectiveness. One example of novelty is to bring in a different element. I use toys from the Dollar Store to add novelty to review games. By adding toy soldiers, you can turn task cards into "War", or create sculptures out of play-doh or pipe cleaners that summarize key concepts. Simple solutions can entice jaded teenagers.
5. *Does the game include critical thinking questions or help students make connections?* Are there multiple opportunities for students to think about the content in different ways? Some games miss this target. For example, I played Bingo for years – but all the students needed to do was remember a simple definition. While that is helpful for some assessments, it will not provide critical thinking practice for your students. One simple way to incorporate critical thinking is through the questions you ask. For example, if you are playing a sorting game on eras – the first level of the game is memorization, when did each event occur? But as the game continues, you can ask cause and effect questions, categorization questions, impact questions and even questions that make connections to events across time or to today.
6. *How can you add a history twist to the ordinary?* Take games students have played for years and freshen them up with historical content. Students know how to play memory – now have them play with the Bill of Rights. Students love spoons – play this popular game with vocabulary terms, images, definitions, and examples.
7. *Can you add a challenge element to your game?* Escape rooms are great opportunities for students to solve challenges while they are still reviewing. Students love solving puzzles! Create an experience with your students reviewing key events in history. Adding social media certificates enhance the experience for your students.

History can be fun!
(And Rigorous!)

Activities with Task Cards

Do you use task cards in your classroom? Have you experimented with the many different ways they can help students review content? Task cards are a series of question cards that can help you keep your students engaged while you are reviewing content. They are versatile and easy to implement. Here are a few of my favorite ways to use task cards with students.

- **Ask 3 or Tell 2** – Break up a lecture with a quick task card activity. Choose task cards that are relevant to certain topics in your lecture. Pass out the task cards to your students. Allow your students to stand up and ask 3 different students the question on their task card – or – tell 2 different students the answer to their question on their task card. After a certain amount of time, have your students sit back down and continue the lecture.
- **Early Finishers** – With a little bit of prep, you have activities that can keep your students from losing valuable instructional time. Print off several sets of the task cards and cut them out. Place them in a baggie with the answer key. Designate a location in your room (like a bookshelf) where you will always keep them. When students finish an assignment, they can grab a partner and a set of task cards. Your students can quiz each other over the questions on the task cards, competing for points.
- **Scoot** – Do your kids need to get up and moving to get blood flowing back to their brain? Play a quick game of scoot with task cards. Place the cards in order around the room on your walls or in the hallway. Give every student an answer sheet and a corresponding number to start (Example: Maria start on 10, John start on 11, etc.). Challenge your students to answer the questions as they "scoot" from one question to the next.
- **Focus on a Skill** – Do your students need to practice a certain skill like cause and effect or inferencing? Use the task cards that focus on those certain skills for extra practice.
- **Card Pocking** – This is a version of "Egg Pocking" played during Easter – your students will play against each other to stump each other with task card questions. Give each student a task card at random. Students will find a partner and ask their partner a question. If they both get it correct, they each go to another student to ask them the question. If one of them gets it incorrect, they sit down. Once several students have been eliminated, discuss the harder questions whole group.



- **Beat the Clock** – Place students in small groups of 3 or 4. Give each group a stack of task cards and an answer sheet. Challenge the students to answer as many questions as they can in a certain time period. The group or individual who gets the most correct wins a small prize.

Activities with Task Cards

•**War** – Use toy soldiers to add an element of fun to a set of task cards. Partner up your students. Each player needs an equal number of soldiers. Place the task cards face down. Take turns answering the questions. If you get a question correct, take your opponent's soldier, if you get the answer incorrect, place a soldier on the "Reserve" card. If you answer a question with a star correctly, you will win all of the soldiers in the "Reserve". If there is a dispute over the correct answer, check the answer key. The player with the most soldiers at the end of the game wins!



•**Flip the Frog** – This is a reverse version of Hot Potato. Buy plastic frogs at a dollar store. Put your students into groups of 3-4 and give each group 1 plastic frog. Place the task cards face down in a stack. Students take turns answering the task card questions. If they get the question correct, they get to hold the frog. After a certain amount of time, stop the game. The student holding the plastic frog wins.

•**Scavenger Hunt** – This is another game that will get your students up and out of their seats for a quick brain break. "Hide" the task cards around your room (like on the side of a bookshelf, taped to the side of a desk, etc.). Partner your students and give them an answer sheet. Challenge them to find and answer as many questions as they can in a certain amount of time. The students with the most correct answers win.

•**Exit Tickets** – Write a list of numbers on your board. Pass out a task card to each student. Before a student can leave your class, they have to write their answer on the board. This also works great if a student wants to leave the room to get a drink of water, etc. Before they leave, they need to answer a task card question correctly.

•**Kaboom** – Create a quick "Uno" type game with Kaboom! action cards. Place the students into small groups and give them a set of task cards face down. Include the Kaboom! action cards within each set. Students will take turns choosing questions and answering them. If they get the question correct, they get to keep the card. If they pull an action card like "Reverse", they complete the action. If you choose a Kaboom! card, all of the questions they answered correctly go back in the stack. The student with the most correct questions at the end of the game – wins!