



# Vocabulary Boosting Games for Elementary Learners

[www.kidsacademy.mobi](http://www.kidsacademy.mobi)

Written by Lori Toney, English teacher, educational writer and mother of three school children

Vocabulary. When most adults hear this word regarding their elementary-aged children, they associate it with the English language arts. After all, toddlers and preschoolers spend much of their time mastering **sight words** to improve reading fluency, and kids must know the best words to express themselves in their daily speech and writing.



It's no secret, however, that expanding active and passive vocabulary greatly supports children in developing their cognitive, reasoning and communicative skills. In other words, the larger a child's vocabulary is, the better they can understand, develop and communicate ideas— both across different fields of knowledge and in daily life.

Vocabulary is a vital component of all knowledge and subject areas, and a learner's mental library should never stop growing, even after they graduate from high school or college. Each subject, like science and social studies have their own set of concepts and associated language. For instance, in biology, students will eventually learn the names for parts of a cell, and in geography, they will learn names of landmasses.

No matter what subject or grade level, children must continuously work at expanding their vocabulary to understand the world around them. With so many words to learn, it's important to offer exciting new ways to master them. Let's explore fun, interactive activities to boost your students' vocabulary that are perfect for a variety of subject areas.

## 5 Offline Vocabulary Games for Elementary Classrooms

### 1. Roll and Define Word Challenge

What you'll need: Gather a few dice and prepare sets of notecards that contain assigned vocabulary words and definitions that children are learning.

How to play: Split the class up into small groups of 3-4 students each. Each group gets a die and a set of vocabulary words. The words should be on the front of the card, with their definitions on the back. Set the stack down in each group with the definition side facing down.

Players take turns rolling the die; the number they roll determines the number of points they can earn for a correct answer. Instruct players to then select a card from the pile but be careful not to turn it around immediately! The player will give the card to the student sitting to their left and that player will read it aloud. The student who drew the card will attempt to define it for the rest of the group, while the player on the left checks to see if it is correct. If it is, the player earns the point value shown on the die. If not, the player earns 0 points for that round. Gameplay continues to the left, and the player with the most points after all the cards are drawn wins!

### 2. Dictionary Detectives



What you'll need: All you'll need for this game are preprepared clues, and a dictionary for each group!

How to play: Again, split the class up into small groups, or assign students to work in pairs. Vocabulary words and clues could be made into a worksheet given to each group, posted on the board, or read aloud. The idea is to offer clues that task kids with searching for a word based on its meaning. For example, tell them to "find a page number of a word that means hot that starts with the letter 's'". They will then find words like "scorching" or "searing". Make this a friendly competition by reading the clues aloud and awarding points to the first group to solve it!

### 3. Vocabulary from A-Z

What you'll need: Set a timer and offer worksheets or small whiteboards and dry erase markers depending on how you would like your students to play.

How to play: Split the class up into small groups of 2-3. Each group will receive a worksheet, use a sheet of paper, or use small whiteboards to record their answers. Set a timer for 10 minutes, or however long or short a time you think would be needed to challenge your children. Their task is to work together to come up with a vocabulary word for each letter of the alphabet that pertains to a unit they have been studying. Some letters may be omitted, such as Q or Z if no words for that unit exist. Players race



to write down words for each letter; the team with the most correct words when the timer goes off wins!

#### 4. Head's Up Charade Game



What you'll need: A set of notecards that have a vocabulary word written on it.

How to play: This is a wildly fun game to play as a whole class! One student sits in the "hot seat" at the front of the class and selects a vocabulary notecard that is in a pile and is face down. The student is not allowed to see the word on the card, but the rest of the class will. The student will hold the card up to their forehead so the class can see the word. The student in the hot seat asks the class questions, to which they may only answer by saying "yes" or "no" until the student can correctly guess the word on their head.

In between all the fun, don't forget that classroom games are best when learning is presented and reinforced in a variety of ways, including independent practice. Kids Academy offers a collection of [digital vocabulary lessons](#) for preschool through grade 3. These lessons offer important skill-building activities that focus on concepts like prefixes, suffixes, and different types of words and parts of speech to bolster vocabulary learning across the subject areas. Find out more by clicking [here](#) to view lessons on our website:

[Vocabulary lessons for Preschool](#)

[Vocabulary lessons for Grade K](#)

[Vocabulary lessons for Grade 1](#)

[Vocabulary lessons for Grade 2](#)

[Vocabulary lessons for Grade 3](#)

Or use the web-based [Kids Academy Classroom](#) to create curated classes on different topics, including vocabulary, and share them with your students!

