

# ESL Class Games

6 High School Boys — Detailed Rules & Teaching Notes

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## Spyfall

*Social deduction · Speaking · Questions*

**Players:** 4–8 (perfect for 6)    **Time:** 15–30 min    **Materials:** Spyfall cards (or printed location cards) — free printables available online

### Setup

Shuffle the location cards. Deal one face-down to each player. Everyone except the Spy gets the same location. The Spy gets a blank card (or a card that just says 'Spy').

### How to Play

- Players take turns asking each other one question about the location (e.g. 'Would you wear special clothes here?').
- The Spy must answer convincingly without knowing the location.
- Non-spies must avoid answers that make the location too obvious.
- After all players have asked and answered, everyone votes on who they think the Spy is.
- The Spy wins by either: (a) not getting voted out, or (b) correctly guessing the location after being caught.
- Non-spies win by correctly voting out the Spy.

**Example locations:** Airport, Beach, Casino, Hospital, School, Police Station, Restaurant, Space Station, Submarine

### ESL Teaching Note

*Great for ESL because every player must speak every round. Encourage students to use indirect language: 'Is the atmosphere usually relaxed or tense here?'*

## Alibi

*Speaking · Past tense · Questions · Improvisation*

**Players:** 6 (works perfectly)      **Time:** 20–30 min      **Materials:** None — just a scenario written on the board perfectly)

### Setup

Write a crime scenario on the board: 'Last Saturday night, someone stole the school trophy. The time: 8–10 PM.' Divide students into pairs (3 pairs). Each pair are suspects.

### How to Play

- Give each pair 3–4 minutes to build their alibi together: Where were you? Who else was there? What did you eat/drink? What were you wearing? What was the weather like? What did you talk about?
- Separate the pairs — send one partner to a different corner of the room.
- The teacher (or a student detective) interrogates each person separately, asking the same questions.
- After all interrogations, compare answers. The pair with the most inconsistencies is guilty.
- The class votes on which pair they think did it and why.

### ESL Teaching Note

*Forces natural past tense use ('We were at...', 'We had...', 'She was wearing...'). The negotiation during alibi-building is also great speaking practice.*

## Just One

*Cooperative · Vocabulary · Association*

**Players:** 3–7 (works for 6)      **Time:** 20–30 min      **Materials:** Just One board game OR paper slips for each player

### Setup

One player is the Guesser. Everyone else is a Clue-giver. Draw a word card (or teacher writes a word on the board hidden from the Guesser).

### How to Play

- Each Clue-giver secretly writes ONE word as a clue on their slip of paper.
- Before showing the Guesser, Clue-givers compare their slips. Any duplicate clues are removed (turned face-down).
- The Guesser sees only the remaining unique clues and makes one guess.
- Score a point if correct. Play 13 rounds. Try to beat your previous score — it's cooperative.

### ESL Teaching Note

*Students quickly learn that obvious clues (e.g. 'animal' for 'dog') get cancelled out. They must think of creative, specific associations — great for expanding vocabulary range.*

## Hot Seat / Back to the Board

*Vocabulary · Teams · Speed*

**Players:** Any size — **Time:** 10–20 min **Materials:** Whiteboard and marker  
works for 6 as 2 teams  
of 3

### Setup

Split into two teams. One student from each team sits in the 'Hot Seat' with their back to the board. The teacher writes a word on the board.

### How to Play

- The student's teammates describe the word using any words, gestures, or sentences — but NOT the word itself or any form of it.
- The student in the hot seat guesses the word.
- First team to guess correctly scores a point.
- Rotate so each student gets a turn in the hot seat.
- Variation: use categories (jobs, foods, adjectives) to target specific vocabulary.

### ESL Teaching Note

*Taboo-style rule: add 2–3 forbidden words on the board along with the target word. Forces students to paraphrase and use synonyms.*

## Running Dictation

*Reading · Writing · Listening · Physical*

**Players:** Any size — **Time:** 15–20 min **Materials:** A short text (6–8 sentences) printed or written on  
pairs work best paper, tape

### Setup

Tape the text to a wall across the room or outside in the corridor. Students work in pairs: one 'Runner,' one 'Writer.'

### How to Play

- The Runner walks to the text, reads and memorizes a chunk (a sentence or phrase).
- The Runner walks back (no running if space is limited) and dictates what they remember to the Writer.
- The Writer writes it down exactly.
- Repeat until the full text is written.
- First pair to finish with an accurate copy wins. Teacher reads the original aloud to check.

### ESL Teaching Note

*Use a text relevant to current topic — grammar rules, a short story, a recipe, a news headline. Boys respond well to the competitive physical element. Make accuracy count: deduct a point per error.*

## Codenames

*Teams · Vocabulary · Association · Strategy*

**Players:** 4–8 (6 = two teams of 3, perfect)    **Time:** 20–30 min    **Materials:** Codenames board game OR a 5x5 grid of printed words + a key card

### Setup

Lay 25 word cards in a 5x5 grid. One player per team is the Spymaster — they look at the secret key card that shows which words belong to which team and which is the Assassin.

### How to Play

- Spymasters take turns giving a one-word clue + a number: e.g. 'OCEAN: 3' means three of your team's words relate to the ocean.
- Teammates discuss and touch the cards they think match the clue.
- If correct, they may guess again (up to the number given).
- If they touch the other team's word, the other team scores it. If they touch the Assassin, they lose immediately.
- First team to uncover all their words wins.

### ESL Teaching Note

*Spymasters must think carefully about word associations — excellent for higher-level vocabulary. Observers learn by hearing teammates debate ('Does BARK go with tree or dog?').*

## Two Truths and a Lie — Interrogation Edition

*Speaking · Critical thinking · Improvisation*

**Players:** Any size    **Time:** 15–20 min    **Materials:** None

### Setup

Each student thinks of two true statements and one lie about themselves. Statements should be specific and believable (avoid obvious ones).

### How to Play

- Student reads their three statements aloud.
- Before anyone guesses, each other player gets to ask ONE follow-up question about any statement.
- The student must answer in character — defending their lie convincingly.
- After all questions, everyone votes on which statement is the lie.
- The student reveals the answer. Anyone who guessed correctly gets a point.

### ESL Teaching Note

*The follow-up question rule forces extended speaking from both sides — the questioner must think of a probing question, the speaker must improvise a detailed response. Encourage 'Where exactly?', 'How old were you?', 'Who was with you?'*

## Mafia / Werewolf (Advanced Roles)

*Social deduction · Extended speaking · Strategy*

**Players:** 6–12 (works for 6 with adjusted roles)    **Time:** 20–40 min    **Materials:** Role cards (printable) — or use playing cards to assign roles

### Setup

Assign roles secretly: 2 Mafia/Werewolves, 1 Detective, 1 Doctor, 2 Villagers (adjust for 6 players). One student or the teacher acts as Narrator.

### How to Play

- **NIGHT:** All players close eyes. Narrator calls each group: Mafia opens eyes and silently points to a victim. Detective opens eyes and points to a suspect (Narrator nods yes/no). Doctor opens eyes and points to someone to save.
- **DAY:** Narrator announces who was 'killed' (unless the Doctor saved them). That player is eliminated.
- All living players debate and argue for 3–5 minutes about who the Mafia is.
- Players vote to eliminate a suspect. Majority rules.
- Repeat night/day until: Mafia = remaining Villagers (Mafia wins) or both Mafia are eliminated (Villagers win).

### ESL Teaching Note

*Set a rule: eliminated players must explain their reasoning before leaving. Award bonus points for convincing arguments. The Mafia must lie fluently under pressure — high-stakes speaking practice.*

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Top picks for teenage boys who enjoy Werewolf: Spyfall and Alibi — same deception engine, more language output per player.