Technology for Teachers

Using Technology for Learning Languages: Review Games

Jamie Suria, Fairfax County VA Public Schools

One of the most important aspects of instruction is reinforcement. Our students always benefit from reviewing what has already been taught, and manipulating what they have learned in a variety of contexts. However, using the same methods to review material can become stale and doesn't appeal to the wide range of learning styles and aptitudes in your classroom. Luckily, there are a lot of resources available online to help you design games that will keep your review fresh and – most importantly – engaging!

BINGO

The classic game of BINGO can be adapted to review and practice many different topics in the language classroom. Websites such as FreeBingoMaker.com allow you generate your own BINGO cards with whatever you want – numbers, words, or phrases! Obviously, using numbers is a great way to make connections across content areas – for example, by having students solve math problems written entirely in the target language.

Custom BINGO cards can be also be used to review vocabulary or grammar. Provide clues that require students to fill in the blank with the correctly conjugated verb, or match vocabulary words with images or target language definitions. The clues you create can be shown in a simple PowerPoint, or by writing them directly on the board. The great thing about using BINGO as a review tool is that you can make it as simple or complicated as your needs dictate and your preparation time allows for.
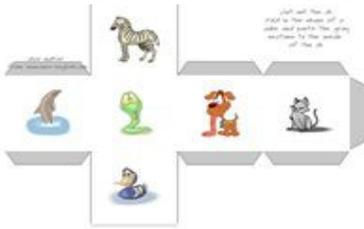
Board Games

Many websites are available to make your own board games. Tools for Educators has a variety of board game templates that use only images – meaning they could be used in any language classroom! You can change the images and decide on the rules that suit the needs of your classroom. Use these to help students review vocabulary, grammar, or practice speaking.
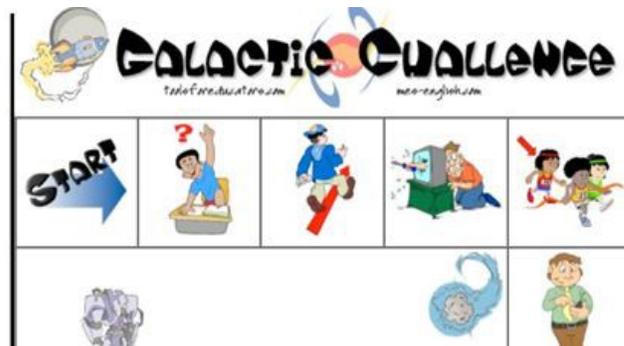

For even more flexibility, there are blank board game templates available which allow you to control all of the content of the board spaces. Some even have customizable "question" cards if you want to add more complexity to your games. There are many designs to choose from, and most are available in PDF or DOC format for easy printing and editing. Consider having your students write their own questions for the board spaces and cards – and then switching game boards with another group before they play. This gives them double the opportunities to review, and engages everyone in some healthy competition.

As you probably know, most board games require dice. Don't have enough dice laying around for all your students to play at the same time? Not to worry! Tools for Educators has a large variety of printable dice that you can customize, print, and assemble yourself. Of course, there are the traditional dice with numbers, but also many different dice that use words and images. Many games could be designed around these dice alone – no board or other equipment required!

PowerPoint Jeopardy
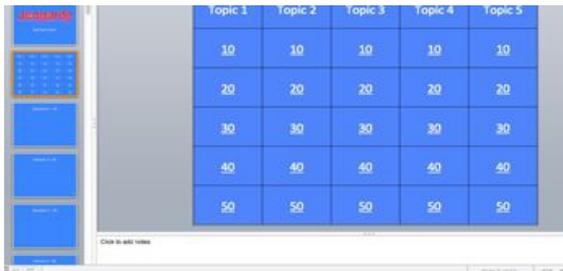
A quick Google search will show you that there are dozens of templates available to make your own Jeopardy games using PowerPoint! Check out this list put together by the Educational Technology Network to get you started. The great thing about using PowerPoint is that once you create the Jeopardy questions to review the topic of your choosing, you can use the game over and over again with all your classes – no set up or assembly required.

Once again, let your students do the hard work (and get extra opportunities to review) by writing the questions. You can sort through the questions your students write and choose the ones you want to type into the PowerPoint. You will be surprised to find that sometimes students write better questions than we would as teachers! Since students can't be sure whether their team or another team might pick their question, they tend to write questions that are not too difficult, but also not too easy.

Do you have any other creative ways to make review fun and engaging? Let us know your ideas!