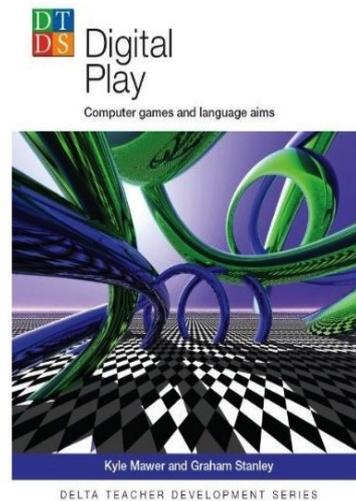
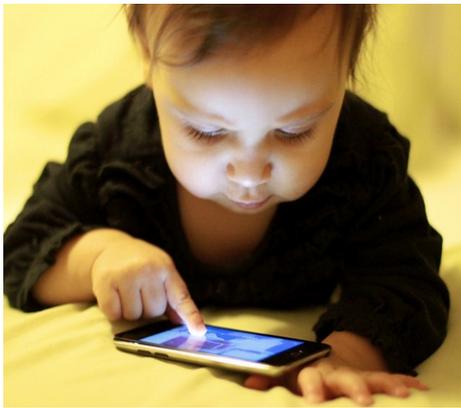


# LANGUAGE TEACHING WITH ONLINE DIGITAL GAMES PART A SPEAKING & LISTENING



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[HTTP://TLLG.WIKISPACES.COM](http://TLLG.WIKISPACES.COM)

## Introduction

This is the first of two booklets that have been produced for the TESOL Electronic Village Online (EVO) 2012 session (in collaboration with the IATEFL LT SIG) 'Teaching and Learning Languages through Gamification' held in [Moodle](#) and archived at <http://tllg.wikispaces.com>.

This part, **Part A** concentrates on **online games for speaking and listening**

The contents are based on material in the book [Digital Play \(Delta Publishing\)](#) and the blog of the same name (<http://www.digitalplay.info/blog>). If you want to know more about the book, you can [read an interview with the authors of Digital Play in 'It's for Teachers'](#).

## TLLG overview

*"Games are a more natural way to learn than traditional classrooms. Not only have humans been learning by playing games since the beginning of our species, but intelligent animals have as well."* (Clark Aldrich, *Learning Online with Games, Simulations and Virtual Worlds*, 2009)

Teaching and Language Learning through Gamification (TLLG) aims to give educators the opportunity to investigate the potential of gamification of language learning and teacher development. Gamification is the application of gaming concepts to non-game experiences.

We will be covering:

- looking at specific examples and contexts where gamification has been or can be used;
- using games inside and outside of the language classroom;
- engaging in professional development through play.

We also hope the session will lead to the forming of a community of educators interested in language learning and gaming to share experiences and ideas for continued development.

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### FRONT COVER IMAGES

[HTTP://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/COUROSA/5536535796](http://www.flickr.com/photos/courosa/5536535796)

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## Part 1 - Introduction to online games



"what makes computer games fun can offer an interesting new light on what will motivate a student to learn." Armando Baltra, Professor in the department of Early Childhood Education, California State University

In the first part of this booklet, you'll get some ideas of how to begin making use of online computer games\* in the classroom and become familiar with different genres of games and how they might lend themselves to being used with learners.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/okaysamurai/1269826969/>

\* In this booklet, I use the terms *computer games*, *video games*, *digital games* to mean the same thing – i.e. any game played on a games console (such as the *Microsoft Xbox360*, *PlayStation3*, *Nintendo Wii*, etc.); desktop or laptop computer; or handheld/mobile device (*iPod*, mobile phone, tablet, etc).

### HOW TO GET STARTED

Are you a gamer? Do your learners play computer games? My guess is that most of you will answer 'No' to the first question above, and 'Yes' to the second one. There seems to be an experience gap between teachers and learners when it comes to playing video games, and many teachers don't even ask their students about the games they play, even though in many cases the time they spend playing them may exceed the time they spend on other free time activities. The point of this booklet is to get you to think about changing this, and if you find your learners do spend lots of their free time playing computer games, then you will find a lot of activities to help you in the classroom.

The best way to get started is to **a)** talk to your learners about the games they play and **b)** play some games yourself. Although it's not strictly necessary for you to play computer games in order to use them in the classroom, I believe there is nothing that can take the place of real experience. Playing a computer game or two, especially if you aren't normally a gamer, will give you a better idea of how your learners feel when they play games

### GAME GENRES

There are many types of computer game genres (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video\\_game\\_genres](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_game_genres)) but not all of them are suitable for encouraging language skills practice. The games we are going to concentrate on here are all short online digital games built around an information gap.

They include:-

- ✦ **Point-and-click** ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point-and-click\\_adventure\\_game#Point-and-click\\_adventure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point-and-click_adventure_game#Point-and-click_adventure)). These games are often adventure games and involve the gamer clicking on different objects, and often combining these objects in order to progress in the game.
- ✦ **Escape the room** ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escape\\_the\\_room](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escape_the_room)). A sub-genre of the point-and-click game that requires the gamer to solve puzzles and 'escape the room'.

### TASKS

a) Next time you can, question your learners about the video games they play and ask them if they think they have learned any English (or other language) from playing them.

b) Play one or two of the games mentioned in this booklet and write in the forum any ideas that come to mind about how they could be used in the classroom with learners. Here are a couple to get you started:

- ✦ Quest for the rest <http://amanita-design.net/thequestfortherest/>  
solution: <http://blog.sillica.com/2008/01/04/quest-for-the-rest-walkthrough/>
- ✦ The Crimson Room [http://www.fasco-csc.com/works/crimson/crimson\\_e.php](http://www.fasco-csc.com/works/crimson/crimson_e.php)  
<http://www.b-sting.nl/crimsonroom/solve.html>

### IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME

Watch the February 2010 recording (Elluminate virtual classroom) of James Paul Gee about 'Video Games Learning and Literacy' <http://www.learncentral.org/node/53213>

## Part 2 - Games to encourage speaking



"All I have to do is mention the name of a game in class and I get tremendous respect from my students." A Teacher, quoted in '[Don't bother me mom - I'm learning](#)' by Marc Prensky

There are so many ways to encourage speaking with computer games. You don't even have to have access to any computer games in the classroom to do so.

Often, just encouraging the learners to talk about their favourite computer games is enough to start a lively discussion in class. The reason for this, in my experience, is that few teachers ever take an interest in computer games (because it is usually outside the teachers area of experience) that when you do, the learners often react very positively.

[http://www.flickr.com/photos/the\\_puppeteer/6464822197](http://www.flickr.com/photos/the_puppeteer/6464822197)

### THE CONNECTED CLASSROOM

If you have one computer in your classroom, connected to the internet and perhaps displaying the image through a projector to a large screen or an interactive whiteboard, then your classroom is 'connected'.

With only one machine available, the challenge here is for all the learners to be involved in what's going on – and for the teacher to avoid being the 'sage on the stage'.

Here are some ideas how to exploit this environment for speaking :

- ✦ **You drive like an old man.** General. Beginner->Intermediate learners. Language: Directions. <http://www.digitalplay.info/blog/2011/09/30/you-drive-like-an-old-man/>
- ✦ **Dot to dot.** Young Learners. Lower levels. Language: Numbers and vocabulary. <http://www.digitalplay.info/blog/2011/09/02/dot-to-dot/>
- ✦ **The Magician.** General. Upper intermediate. Language: Going to, modals (present and past) <http://www.digitalplay.info/blog/2011/07/08/the-magician/>
- ✦ **Play Spent.** Adults. Advanced. Language: Negotiation, advice <http://www.digitalplay.info/blog/2011/04/15/another-interactive-text-adventure-spent/>

### FINDING GOOD GAMES

How can you find good games to use with a class? The best way of course, is for a game to be recommended – this could be from a student, another teacher, on the *Digital Play* blog (<http://www.digitalplay.info/blog>).

However, if you want to go looking for your own game, there are a number of websites you can use that are useful and which rate games. Of course, the review information can also be used in class, as reading material, or prompts for discussion, etc.

- ✦ Jay is Games. Review site of online games. <http://jayisgames.com/>
- ✦ Kids know it. Source of educational games. <http://kidsknowit.com/>
- ✦ Online games. Online games rated and ordered. <http://www.onlinegames.net/>
- ✦ Zap Dramatic. Serious games for education. <http://zapdramatic.com/>

### TASK

As before, try out one of the games above and report back in the forum on if you thought it would work with your own students, and if you came up with any other ideas how to use the game.

## Part 3 - Games to practise listening



"Like all games, computer and video games entertain while promoting social development, and playing and talking about games is an important part of young people's lives." Dr. Caroline Pelletier, lecturer in ICT in Education.

One of the easiest ways to make use of online games, especially if you're a busy teacher is to choose a game with an information gap or puzzles, take the solution (or walkthrough) and use this as the basis of a 'live listening' (i.e. the learners listen to the teacher). The advantage of doing this, apart from the lack of preparation time, is that you can adapt your language to the level of the learners, making the listening more or less challenging.

[http://farm4.staticflickr.com/3572/3458856098\\_4740af6929\\_m.jpg](http://farm4.staticflickr.com/3572/3458856098_4740af6929_m.jpg)

Read on for other strategies for finding and using walkthroughs, and before that, some considerations when using games in the computer room with learners, along with a selection of games & proposed activities to try out.

### THE COMPUTER ROOM

Managing the learners in the computer room is worth considering. How you arrange the room and the learners will depend on the activity in hand. However, here are some suggestions which make the most of the space and computer equipment.



When there is an activity where the focus is on the learners, with them able to talk together in pairs or small groups. The teacher's role here is to monitor, and you will be easily able to see how much the learners understand if the activity is a listening. The picture (by [Mike Coghlan](#)) on the left reflects this set-up.

There are other possible configurations of the computer room space which you would want to consider if, for example, you were doing a relay reading activity, with the learners running between the solution that has been posted on a wall and their partner playing the computer game. Here are some listening activities with games for you to try:-

[Escape the Plush Room](#). Primary. Questions and short answers.

[Stage 7](#). Lower Intermediate. Speech from the game.

[The Ballad of Kinetto](#). Intermediate. Dictation.

[Pirates of the Undead Sea](#). Upper Intermediate. Live listening

[Bow Street Runner](#). Upper Intermediate / Advanced. Comprehension.

### USING 'WALKTHROUGHS'

The most important thing when using online games is to ensure the learners have a task that practises language. Without this, they'd just be playing the game for fun. Fortunately for the language teacher, when the fun of a good game comes out of solving puzzles, finding clues and completing different levels, you'll be able to find help in the form of a *walkthrough*.

A *walkthrough* is a step-by-step guide to completing a game, and can be used by a teacher both as a shortcut to the game and the basis for a language task. They are usually collectively written by gamers and published on games sites in the comments next to a review or announcement of a new game. If a game is particularly popular, it might even have its own fan sites, and the walkthroughs will be published there, often illustrated with screenshots.

Let's look at an excerpt from a walkthrough for an online game called *the Viridian Room* and examine how a teacher could exploit this. The game's genre is *escape the room* and the objective is to find a way out. The player does this by discovering clues and making connections between objects found in the room.

When you look at the walkthrough, you'll see it is a text rich in vocabulary and with a variety of different verbs and directions for the player to follow.

### **The Viridian Room**

<http://www.fasco-csc.com/works/viridia>

- 1) Turn the light on by clicking the bright spot in the middle at the bottom of the screen.
- 2) Look in the trashcan next to the small fridge.
- 3) Open the fridge and close it again to be able to reach the trashcan.
- 4) Get the hair out of the trashcan and put it into your inventory.
- 5) Examine the hair
- 6) etc...

How can a teacher best use this information? Well, the easiest way to exploit a text such as this, is as a live listening. This requires no preparation, and a teacher can adapt the language to the level of the learners he or she is teaching. One of the interesting things about this too is that you can easily see if the learners understand you by looking at what they do on the computer screen.

Another effective task is to prepare the walkthrough text as a reading comprehension. Again, no questions are required – if the learners understand the instructions, they will complete the tasks in the game. In fact, although many of these games are long and you will probably find you only have time (in a 20 minutes computer room session, for example) to finish one level of a game, you may find your learners asking to take home the instructions to be able to finish the game on their own. Be sure to encourage this as it means they will be reading lots in English without even thinking of it as homework!

### **FINDING 'WALKTHROUGHS'**

Generally speaking, if a game is good (i.e. popular and engaging), then there'll be a walkthrough for the game. You should be able to find it by searching Google with 'the name of the game' + 'walkthrough'. It may be that you have to look at a couple of the entries before you find one that you can use, but it's worth it.

The next thing you have to do is to decide how to adapt the walkthrough for class. You may want to play the game with the walkthrough to see if the game is suitable, and to change any of the terms or expressions (for example – 'click on the pen' may become 'pick up the pen on the table').

Then you should be ready to go.

### **TASK**

Choose one of the games mentioned earlier, look at the walkthrough and report back in the forum on if you thought it would work with your own students, and if you came up with any other ideas how to use the game.

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We've come to the last part of booklet A. Booklet B continues with ideas for Reading and Writing. If you like what you've read, remember that there are lots more ideas and information in the book [Digital Play](#). Hope you have fun!

**GRAHAM STANLEY, JANUARY 2012**