



Integrating MindGame

Integrating MindGame into your teaching

It is extremely easy to integrate **MindGame** into your teaching as it generally functions as a discrete activity which you can slot into your lesson plan.

Activity 1

Now you have played **MindGame**, and understand the program, spend 15 minutes or so working with a partner to discuss how you could use the program in your teaching situation. Try to think of at least four different applications (and focus on language points, classroom activities, student types, and so on). When you have finished, open the discussion up to the whole group. Each participant should share their ideas. (Do not read on until you have completed this activity!)

Mario Rinvoluceri, the author, suggests these four situations when you might want to use **MindGame**:



1. For pair work in the lab

Suppose you have an elementary class and a lot of irregular past tenses have come up over the past three or four weeks in the units you have covered from the coursebook. You feel that the students need to consolidate their grasp of these bizarre verb forms (to speakers of languages with more regular verb grammar, they really do seem bizarre!). In the past, you have usually given the students the homework task of revising the verbs in preparation for a classroom test. With **MindGame**, you can achieve the same pedagogical aim (consolidation of half-learned verb forms) without recourse to boring rote-learning homework and the stress of a test. You simply take your elementary class into the computer lab, place them two to a machine and have them work on past simple verbs or past participles. I say *work* because that is what they are actually doing, but most students don't perceive it that way. They feel they are playing an intriguing game; the learning of the knobbly grammar is buried in the desire to beat their partner in a classic, age-old contest.

2. For individual homework assignments

Use **MindGame** as dynamic homework in boring but necessary areas where there have never been any exciting exercises to offer students. Suppose you have an FCE class and you realise that your students, in the run-up to the exam, need more practice with differentiating the noun form from the verb form (as for example with practice vs.

to practise, economy/economics vs. to economise/economize), you might like to set them **MindGame** homework in this area. All they have to do is play one of the *Verbs and nouns* games against the computer. This allows much faster learning than by sitting staring at a noun-verb list, which is what many of us did as learners.

3. For self-study

How much free study do your students get a chance to do? **MindGame** is excellent for self-study in two ways:

- It offers the students a good selection of exercises to choose from, some of which may seem to them to be completely new ways of working with language (for example *Anagrams* or *Homophones*).
- It offers the students a simple authoring program that allows them to input whatever content they wish to work on. This is **MindGame's** huge plus, as the very act of authoring in an area of his or her choice helps the student to learn the material selected, even before consolidating that knowledge by playing the game. And you don't need to worry about students having to find perfect binary pairs for their games, because the authoring program accepts alternative answers. All the students need to do is separate the possible answers with a backslash (eg learned/learnt).

4. For introspective students

Do you ever have shy, introspective students who really don't like all the interaction you promote in class? These learners are the ones who Howard Gardner suggest live a lot in their "intra-personal intelligences". Of course, sometimes you have to force them to interact, because otherwise they could never learn the oral language. But how about, at other times, letting them off the hook and allowing them a go on the computers at the back of your classroom, working on a **MindGame** assignment you give them? It could even be something you have authored especially for them.

Clarity Tip

Instead of having two players for MindGame, try four! Having two pairs playing against each other increases the spirit of competition and partners can discuss answers, adding a speaking dimension to the activity. But you might have to appoint an English enforcer to make sure they stick to English!



Adding new material to MindGame

You may wish to tailor **MindGame** to a particular language area you are teaching. For example, in **MindGame** Lower Intermediate there is a game on irregular simple past forms, but there is no game on regular forms. In this activity we will create a simple game on this area.

Activity 1

1. Open **MindGame** Lower Intermediate Authoring Kit. Click on New Game and type "Forming the simple past." Move on to point 3, and type the questions. On the A side, type, "What is the simple past of [A]?" and in the box beneath type, "It's [B]." (When the student plays the game, the As and Bs will be replaced by the relevant words.) On the B side, type, "What is the base form of [B]?" and in the box below, "It's [A]." You are now ready to add your word pairs.
2. Click on Type, and type the base form in the left hand box (eg "walk") and the simple past in the right hand box (eg "walked"). Then press Enter. To check that you have got your As and Bs the right way round, click on "walk" and then Try it out. This will present the question as the student will see it. When you are happy, type the next pair of words, eg "stop" - "stopped", then "study" - "studied", and so on. 18 word pairs is a good number, so you could use the following:

walk	arrive	stop	carry
look	phone	tap	study
lift	like	fit	marry
play	love	travel	hurry

and perhaps add in a couple of irregulars to raise awareness that not everything goes by the rules!

3. When you have finished, click on Save and, at the bottom, Click to start MindGame. You will see your game in the lower box of the log on screen - click on it and play!

Activity 2

Imagine the situation where you will be working on a text next week and you want to pre-teach some of the vocabulary. Create a bilingual version of **MindGame** which includes the target words in English on one side and in students' L1 on the other side. Attach the text as an .rtf file at the bottom of the screen where it says, 6. Attach file for What's Next? Students play the game and in playing it learn the words. At the end they click on What's next? and can read the text.

Some students feel that learning is a serious business and that they should not be playing games in class. This type of activity clearly shows them the value of **MindGame** as an activity. To emphasize this further you could give

them the text to read before playing the game and then again, afterwards. This will show how well they have learned the unknown vocabulary.
