



Children's Museum of Houston

Pre/Post Classroom Activities

Across and Down

Rationale

Think Tank encourages children to use higher level thinking skills by using an array of lively and interactive components and activities. Four child characters serve as the gallery guides, spreading the message that thinking and problem solving is fun, hip, and “the thing to do.” This lesson introduces children to higher level thinking skills and provides practice of processes and tools used in problem solving. In this lesson, children use strategy to capture the most squares with words.

TEKS Objectives (English Language Arts and Reading)

4.17, 5.17: The student spells proficiently.

Background

This is a game of strategy. The children will need to think ahead several steps and consider what their opponent might do on her turn. This type of game builds flexible thinking while practicing vocabulary.

Vocabulary

Horizontal
Vertical
Diagonal
Strategy

Materials

- 1-inch grid paper
- Pencils

Procedure

Set Up: Think about any “ground rules” you may need to lay out before playing the game with your students. For example, do you want to have them use more than three letters to make the word? Are there any types of words that you will need to explicitly ban before they play? Do you want to give bonus points for use of vocabulary words from a current unit? Also, decide whether you want the group to contribute ground rules or whether you will lay them out ahead of time.

1. This game is a mix between scrabble and a crossword puzzle. The goal is to capture the most squares with words that you add to the game board. The game is played by two players or two teams per game board.
2. Decide who goes first.

3. Player 1 writes a word anywhere on the game board. The score equals the number of letters in the word.
4. Player 2 writes a word on the game board, BUT must use one of the letters of the word already on the board. The score equals the number of letters player 2 adds to the game board.
5. Players take turns adding words. Each new word must use at least one letter that is already on the board. The score for each turn equals the number of letters the player adds to the board.
6. Play until no more words can be added to the game board.

Questions to ask

- Is it better to play first or second?
- How did you decide which word to add to the board?
- What did you do when the other player added a word that you thought of using?

Extensions

Play Scrabble and talk about how these games are similar and different. How do you have to change your thinking when you change games?

Make Word Squares. These are grids that when filled with letters will spell words in every column and every row. Start with a 3 x 3 grid and try the words ape, hat, and ten.

Resources

Find many other brain teasers and games in *1000 Play Thinks: Puzzles, Paradoxes, Illusions and Games* by Ivan Moscovich, Workman Publishing Company, Inc., 2001.