

Suggested level

Lower-intermediate

Aims

- to explore the metaphor 'the game of life'
- to introduce and practise common nouns and idioms relating to this metaphor
- to promote fluency in speaking

Word list

gamble, goal, marathon (journey), pawn, (key) player, toy, team player, to play by the rules, to play games with somebody, to play the game, fair play

Preparation

- Photocopy one set of Instructions, the Score card, the Situation cards, the Definition cards, and the Discussion activity for each group or pair.
- Cut up the Situation and Definition cards, and put a set of each in separate envelopes.

In class

Before handing out the instructions

- Dictate the following words: *gamble, goal, marathon, toy, player, game, rules*.
- Ask students in pairs to check the meaning of the words with each other.
- In a whole-class discussion, quickly check that all the students understand the literal meanings of the words on the board. Some students may happen to mention the figurative meanings of a few words as well, but for the moment focus only on the literal meanings of the words.

Instructions

- Organise the students into groups.
- Hand out one sheet of Instructions to each group.
- Ask the students to read the sheet and discuss what they have to do in their group.
- Monitor the groups and check that all the students know what to do.

Situation and Definition cards

- Give each group one set of Situation cards and one set of Definition cards. Instruct each group to take a Situation card from the envelope and to follow the sheet of Instructions. This means that first they discuss any unfamiliar words on the Situation card or look them up in a dictionary.
- Students then match the word or expression in **bold** on the Situation card with one of the Definition cards in the other envelope. Monitor unobtrusively to check that students are doing this.
- When students have matched the cards, ask them to discuss the situation on the Situation card with the others in their group.
- Monitor to check that individual students are writing down the number of the card, and their responses (a, b or c) in each situation.
- Once the group has finished discussing the situation on the Situation Card they take another Situation card from the envelope and repeat the steps above. Continue to monitor the activity, noting down any errors for correction later.

Situation card 1 = Definition card F, Sit 2 = Def D,
 Sit 3 = Def A, Sit 4 = Def G, Sit 5 = Def C,
 Sit 6 = Def B, Sit 7 = Def E, Sit 8 = Def H

Score card

- Hand out the Score card, and get students to add up their score.
- Ask students to guess the meaning of *pawn, fair play* and *team player*. Provide explanations if necessary.
- Ask students if they agree with the comments made on the sheet. If not, why not?
- Ask students which kind of person, out of the three mentioned on the Score card, they believe will be most successful in life. Why?

Discussion

- Hand out the Discussion activity. If necessary, put the following questions on the board to encourage student discussion: What is a 'good hand' or a 'poor hand'? What do you think the quotation means? Do you agree or disagree with the quotation?
- Ask students to think about any words in their own language relating to sports and games that can be used metaphorically. What are these words, and are they similar to or different from words or phrases used in this way in English?

Note

See Unit 20 Plain sailing (page 72) for more figurative language connected with games and sports.

Revision activity
Writing rules page 128

Playing the game

Games and sports

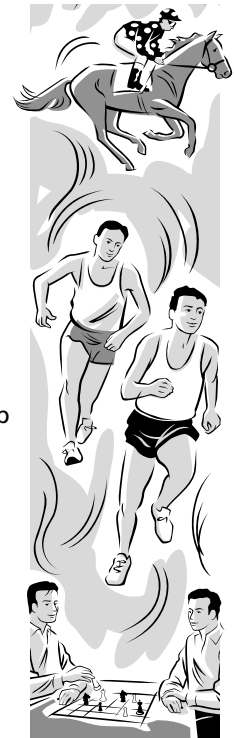


Instructions

The game of life

In games and sports, you have to follow the rules and be fair. Sometimes you win, sometimes you don't! Sometimes you're lucky, sometimes you aren't! Sometimes you have the skill, sometimes you don't! In many other activities in life, there are rules and you need to be fair. Sometimes you need luck and sometimes you need skill. What kind of player are you in **the game of life**? To find out, follow these instructions:

- 1 Take a Situation card from the envelope. With the other students in your group, discuss any words you don't know, or look them up in a dictionary.
- 2 Match the word or expression in **bold** with one of the Definition cards in the other envelope.
- 3 Discuss the situation on the Situation card with other students in your group. What would you do in that situation? Explain your reasons to others.
- 4 Write down a, b, or c depending on what *you* would do in the situation described on the situation card.
- 5 Take another Situation card from the pile and follow steps 1 to 4 again. Do this until you have discussed all the Situation cards.



Score card

How did you score in **the game of life**?

Give yourself the following scores:

Situation card 1:	a = 2	b = 1	c = 3
Situation card 2:	a = 3	b = 1	c = 2
Situation card 3:	a = 1	b = 3	c = 2
Situation card 4:	a = 3	b = 1	c = 2
Situation card 5:	a = 1	b = 3	c = 2
Situation card 6:	a = 3	b = 1	c = 2
Situation card 7:	a = 2	b = 3	c = 1
Situation card 8:	a = 2	b = 1	c = 3

- 18-24:** You are a loyal and trusting person, but be careful you don't become just a **pawn** in other people's games. Do you need to become more independent and more of a **key player** in your own life?
- 12-17:** You are a very honest, fair person who **plays by the rules**. You are never a **pawn**, and you always believe in **fair play**. But will you always get what you really want out of life? Does this matter?
- 8-11:** You are very independent, with strong opinions. You are certainly not a **team player**. But do you sometimes need to **play by the rules** a bit more? Otherwise, people may find you rather secretive and dishonest!



Discussion activity

'The game of life is not so much in holding a good hand as playing a poor hand well.'

H.T. Leslie (quoted in *Quotations For Our time*, compiled by Dr Laurence Peter, Souvenir Press, 1978)



Situation card 1

Your boss wants you to work abroad for six months. You don't want to go. Do you

- a ask her if you can only go for three months?
- b tell her that you will leave if you have to go abroad? (This is a real **gamble** because you don't know if she really wants you to stay.)
- c agree, but hope that she changes her mind?

Situation card 2

You have a very clear **goal** in life. Do you

- a make sure that you never upset anybody else even if it means you can't achieve your goal?
- b do whatever is right for you – and not care if other people don't like it, as that's their problem?
- c try to achieve your goal, but also try not to upset anybody else?

Situation card 3

You've just made a **marathon** journey to visit an old friend. When you arrive, your friend is very rude to you. Do you

- a shout angrily at your friend?
- b behave in your usual friendly way and hope your friend stops being rude?
- c politely ask the friend what the problem is?

Situation card 4

Somebody in your family has a new **toy** – a mobile phone that also sends emails. They are kind enough to lend it to you for a few days. Unfortunately, after a day it stops working. Do you

- a try to find somebody who can mend it for you secretly?
- b give it back without saying it isn't working?
- c say you are sorry and offer to pay for any repairs?

Situation card 5

Your brother has been unemployed for a long time. Finally, he has found a job with a company that wants to be a **key player** in the computer industry. However, a friend has told you that most of this company's ideas for their software products are stolen from another company. Do you

- a tell your brother and all his friends about it?
- b forget about it, because you don't want to upset your brother, and how many companies are really honest anyway?
- c tell your brother because you think he shouldn't join the company?

Situation card 6

Your cousin has just got a new boyfriend, who she likes very much. You think he is **playing games with** her because he wants to make his old girlfriend jealous. Do you

- a do nothing, because your cousin will only get angry?
- b speak to her boyfriend privately, and tell him to stop being so dishonest?
- c warn your cousin, and hope she ends the relationship?

Situation card 7

At the place where you work you are not allowed to use the computer to send personal emails to friends outside the company. You know very well that not everybody **plays by the rules**. In fact, some people spend so much time sending personal emails that they don't do any work. Do you

- a speak to them about it, and tell them you think they should stop?
- b ignore this – you don't want them to get upset with you for telling the boss?
- c complain secretly to your boss about it?

Situation card 8

Your family want you to pass an exam in order to get an important qualification. The subject is very boring and has nothing to do with what you want to do as a career. Do you

- a talk to your family about other ways you can achieve your career goals?
- b refuse to do the exam?
- c **play the game** and just do what you have to do?

Playing the game

Games and sports

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Definition card A

an activity which is long and tiring, and for which you need to be very energetic and determined

Definition card B

to dishonestly hide your real feelings in a relationship in order to make somebody else behave in a particular way

Definition card C

a very important person, or organisation, involved in an event or business

Definition card D

an aim you want to achieve in the future

Definition card E

to follow the correct way of doing something, even if there are easier or quicker ways of doing it

Definition card F

an action or plan which you hope will be successful, but which is risky because it might fail

Definition card G

an object that an adult uses for fun, even if it has a serious purpose

Definition card H

to know how to behave in a way that is expected by other people, even if you do not agree with it