

# RELAY BINGO

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<b>GAME TYPE</b>	<b>language dependent</b>
<b>USAGE TARGETS</b>	<b>question/answer structures, vocabulary</b>
<b>PRIMARY OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>speaking, listening</b>
<b>PRIMARY SKILLS</b>	
<b>SECONDARY OBJECTIVES</b>	
<b>SECONDARY SKILLS</b>	
<b>PREPARATION</b>	<b>med-high</b>

## INTRODUCTION

This game is fast-paced, competitive and a lot of fun. It also requires that students produce a question and answer sequence accurately, quickly and fluently, in order to stand a chance of winning. It can be fairly sophisticated, requiring accurate use of question and answer structures, or it can be used to practise vocabulary. I have used this game at both the primary and secondary level with equal success. The students enjoy this game and they are practising language intensively at the same time.

As this game can be used in any language class, including an ESL/EFL setting, this explanation uses English as the target language example. As it practices conversational structures that will have equivalents in any language, it will be easy to adapt to virtually any language-learning situation. It works best with a standard-sized class of 20 students or more, but it can also work with fewer students and just two teams.

## PRE-CLASS PREPARATION

Before class, you will need to prepare 2 complete sets of cards for each team in your class. Each team will consist of a row of students, around 5 or 6 is ideal, and each card set should consist of 16 to 25 cards, all different, representing different choices within the language

goal you are aiming to practise. For example, if you are going to use the structure *Do you like+fruit word?*, then your cards will need to represent a variety of different fruits that fit within the answer.

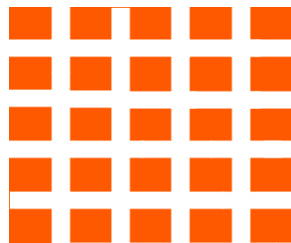
The two sets are best made in two different colours to ensure smooth game play and limit any confusion in setting up the game. We'll be using food cards as an example throughout this explanation, so you would need to make cards that look something like this:



## IN-CLASS PROCEDURE

The class needs to be divided into teams, of about 5 or 6 as previously stated. Ideally, each student will have an individual desk, clear of all books and stationery.

The *first* person's desk, in each team, should be brought forward from the others, and one complete set of cards of one colour should be placed face down, at random, in rows, like this:



The rest of the cards, those of the other colour, should be distributed equally among the *other* members of the team, as much as this is possible. Uneven distribution is not a problem in this game. The first person in the team does not receive any cards of the other colour.

When you've set the game up properly, you should have a desk with a set of cards of one colour face down at the front of each team, and all the members of the team apart from the first, should be sitting in line, behind the first, each with a set of cards of the other colour.

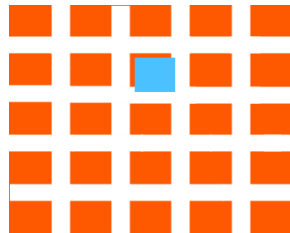
The game is a race, as the name implies. When the teacher says 'Go!' the first student, in each team, who should be standing, turns over any one of the cards on his or her desk. I'll refer to these as 'orange cards' from now on as the diagrams use orange.

The card the student turns over indicates the question he needs to ask. The object is to find the student in his team who has the same card using the language structure you want the students to practise. Let's suppose the card turned over is 'cherries' as in the picture. The first student leaves the card upturned on the front desk, and begins to question the other team members going along the row in order.

This student has to go to the second student in the team and ask the question in the target structure the game is targeting, in this case, as we are talking about food, the question would be *Do you like cherries?* Note that the question has to be a yes/no answer.

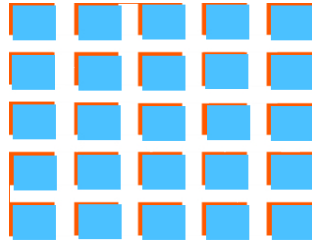
As the first student moves along the row asking the question, the other students look at their cards, and respond *No, I don't* if they don't have the card, and *Yes, I do* if a student is holding that card.

When the student with the corresponding card is found, the first student changes places with the other, whereby the student with the cherry card runs to the front and places her card directly on top of the corresponding card.



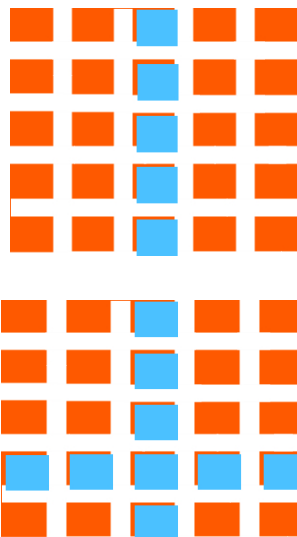
Now she turns over another card, and starts the process all over again, this time inserting the new word into the question structure.

The game is over when all the cards have been matched. The fastest team wins.



## GAME NOTES

- Relay Bingo can also be played like traditional Bingo, whereby teams have to make a line, or two lines to win:



- It doesn't matter if each team's set of cards is in a different order when laid out, face-down, on the front desk, or when distributed to the rest of the team before the start of the game.

In fact, this is desirable, as it adds to the randomness of the game, which makes it more competitive.

- Once you've played this game in a real classroom setting, especially a mixed one with students of varied levels of interest and skill in the target language, as soon as the competitive nature of this game is revealed, it becomes wide open to cheating! If not policed closely, especially in the earlier rounds, you'll find your less interested students avoiding the structures you set as the standard for the activity, and cards being placed on the front desk without the target language being used. In this case, take (some of) the cards back from the front desk and distribute them to the students in that team again, to make a point that cheating won't work in this game.
- The more teachers or assistants present during this game the better, as some students will try and cheat, so you need monitors to watch what is going on. It is also a good idea for a teacher to remain at the front of the class to help students who might need a reminder of the structure or vocabulary item.
- The student who turns over the card at the front must look at the card and *leave* it on the front desk, upturned. The student must not take the card up the line to ask questions, as it encourages cheating and discourages the all-important speaking part of the game. If students forget what they are supposed to be asking, they have to return to the front and look at the card again.
- If playing the game in rounds, then a good way to score it is to assign a number of points to each team, depending on which teams finish first or last. For example, in a class of 6 teams, the first team to finish would get 6 points, the second 5 points etc. This leads to an overall score at the end of the game, and it can encourage teams to try harder to make up points in subsequent rounds.

- If you are using the game to practise vocabulary (as opposed to question and answer structures), at primary school, for example, you would make the cards in the same way, and set up the game in the same way, but the first student would just say the word 'cherries' and the other students would answer *Yes!* Or *No, sorry.*
- You can adapt this game to virtually *any* question and answer structure that offers a variety of answers, for example *Do you have? Do you know? Would you like?* etc.
- The version of Relay Bingo used for this explanation can only be used with yes/no type question and answer structures. However, it can also be used with questions that use question words, such as *What food do you like?* In this case, the first student who turns over the card now gives the answer, and the other students have to ask, *What food do you like?* and check the answer they hear against the cards they are holding. If it matches, then the students change places. I have even used this game with the first student making a statement and the other students saying *I agree* or *I disagree* depending on the cards they are holding.
- It is best to make the cards out of the heaviest paper you can get, as they are likely to end up somewhat mauled after repeated usage. Construction paper is a good choice rather than card, otherwise laminating the cards is a good idea.

## TEACHING/LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Try not to introduce the game until all the students have internalised the structures they need to use, at least up to a level of conscious competence. The game can help to build fluency and reaction time with accuracy, but students do need to have a basic command of the material beforehand.
- If students have been less than interested during the learning phase of the lesson, and are ill-equipped, linguistically, to carry

out the game accurately, then you could try the following tactic: Use one team as an example, while the other teams watch. Go through the procedure and encourage the students in the team to use the language you have set. Make a point of insisting upon correct structures throughout. When all the teams understand the mechanics of the game, explain that they will be competing as teams in a race. This should offer you the opportunity to run through the language items again, with more interest on the part of the students if they realise that success is going to rely on using the language accurately.

- Use the intervals between rounds to practise the question and answer structures again. This is a key opportunity to cover the language structures you want your students to be able to use, and they should be far more open to learning the language and getting it right, once they understand the rules, and what is at stake. If the first round has been less than successful for some teams, you should find the desire to learn has increased considerably due to the competitive nature of this game, so be sure not to waste this golden opportunity.
- Allowing the students time to practise amongst themselves in teams, for a limited period of around 2 minutes, after the teacher's recap after each round, can also be a highly effective way to encourage learning, although it does depend somewhat on the camaraderie of the students in the class.

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