

50 REVIEW GAMES GAME 10

Picture Prompt

One image, many readings, and a reason to describe

Picture Prompt encourages students to use ASL naturally by describing, explaining, and discussing visual images. Because students must communicate ideas rather than recall isolated vocabulary, this activity develops expressive language, observation, and critical thinking.

TIME NEEDED

15–25 minutes

GROUP SIZE

Pairs, groups, or whole class

GRADE LEVELS

Middle, High, College

01 Purpose & Objective

Review vocabulary and grammar while developing descriptive language, storytelling, and conversational skills. A picture gives students something to talk *about*, which changes the task from producing a sign to making themselves understood.

Students will use previously learned vocabulary to describe, interpret, and discuss visual images using ASL.

02 Materials & Skills

Materials

- Photographs or illustrations
- Projector or printed images
- Timer (*optional*)

ASL Skills Practiced

- Expressive and receptive ASL
- Descriptive language and storytelling
- Classifiers and spatial description
- Nonmanual markers

03 Setup

1. Select 10–15 interesting photographs or illustrations — see the selection criteria on the next page.
2. Display one image at a time, or give one image to each group.
3. Review expectations for taking turns and encouraging classmates.
4. Check visibility. Stand at the back of the room and confirm the details are readable from the farthest seat.
5. Choose the prompts you will use, and decide whether groups all work the same one or different ones.

Before You Start

Keep the image up during the discussion. Students describing from memory switch to English word order almost immediately, because they are recalling a list rather than describing a space.

04 Directions

1. Display the picture.
2. Give students one minute to observe quietly.
3. Students complete one or more prompts in ASL.
4. Partners or groups discuss their ideas.
5. Invite volunteers to share with the class and compare different interpretations.

Choosing Images That Work

The image does most of the teaching in this activity, so the selection matters more than the prompt. Look for people mid-action rather than posed, more than one thing happening at once, and enough ambiguity that two students could reasonably disagree about what is going on. A picture with one obvious answer produces one sign and then silence.

Avoid images with visible text — students read it aloud and the task becomes English. Favor real photographs over clip art, choose scenes that reflect a range of people and settings, and check that nothing in the image reduces a group to a stereotype.

05 Suggested Picture Prompts

Assign one, work through several, or let each group draw a different prompt for the same image.

1. Describe everything you see in the picture.
2. Identify five vocabulary words from the current unit.
3. Describe where the picture takes place.
4. What happened just before this picture was taken?
5. What do you think will happen next?
6. Describe the emotions of the people in the picture.
7. Use at least three classifiers to describe the scene.
8. Create a short conversation between two people in it.
9. Describe the weather and time of day.
10. Use five complete ASL sentences.
11. Fingerspell two important objects.
12. Give the picture a title.
13. Tell a beginning, middle, and ending for the scene.
14. Identify one problem shown and propose a solution.
15. Connect the picture to something from your own life.

06 Variations

Beginning

Focus on naming people, places, objects, and colors in the scene.

Intermediate

Require complete ASL sentences and WH-questions between partners.

Advanced

Incorporate classifiers, role shifting, sequencing, and detailed narrative.

Challenge Mode

Cover part of the picture and ask students to infer what is missing. Reveal the complete image afterward and compare predictions against it.

07 Assessment Ideas

Observe students for:

- ☐ Vocabulary accuracy
- ☐ Grammar and nonmanual markers
- ☐ Inference beyond what is literally shown
- ☐ Descriptive detail and use of classifiers
- ☐ Spatial arrangement of the scene
- ☐ Participation and attention to other readings

Watch for whether students place the scene in their signing space or simply list its contents. Placement is the skill this activity is best at building.

08 Troubleshooting

IF THIS HAPPENS

TRY THIS

Students list nouns and stop

Switch to a prompt that requires inference — what happened before, what happens next, what problem do you see.

One student describes it all

Assign each group member a section of the picture, then have them combine into one description.

Every group says the same thing

Ask each group to find one detail no one else noticed and sign it to the class.

Students fingerspell instead of describing

Require three classifiers before any fingerspelling is allowed.

Paul's Best Practice

Choose photographs that spark curiosity rather than ones with obvious answers. The best discussions happen when students notice different details and support their ideas using ASL.

A picture with one right answer ends the conversation before it starts.

Why It Works

Pictures naturally inspire conversation. Students use vocabulary in meaningful contexts while strengthening observation, communication, and storytelling skills. A photograph also has real spatial relationships in it, which pushes students toward classifiers and placement rather than a string of isolated nouns.

Quick Tips

- ✓ Use real-life photographs whenever possible.
- ✓ Select pictures connected to your current lesson.
- ✓ Encourage multiple correct interpretations.
- ✓ Protect the silent observation minute — it is where the details get noticed.
- ✓ Keep the image visible throughout the discussion.

Continue Exploring

Next in the collection:

- ▶ Game #11: Vocabulary Basketball
- ▶ Game #12: Roll the Dice
- ▶ Game #13: Hot Seat

Paul A. Fugate

PAUL A. FUGATE

Founder & CEO, ASLdeafined

Extend the Activity

Build a reusable image bank. Keep the photographs that produced the best discussion, tag each one with the unit it fits, and you will have a ready set for every lesson by the end of the year — the hardest part of this activity is finding good pictures, and it only has to be done once.