

50 REVIEW GAMES GAME 13

Hot Seat

Describe it without naming it

Hot Seat strengthens expressive and receptive ASL through clues, description, and teamwork. One student sits facing away from the board while classmates describe a mystery vocabulary word in ASL. Nobody can simply produce the sign, so everyone has to find another way to say it.

TIME NEEDED

15–25 minutes

GROUP SIZE

Small groups or whole class

GRADE LEVELS

Middle, High, College

01 Purpose & Objective

Review vocabulary by giving and interpreting ASL clues rather than recalling isolated signs. The student in the chair practices receptive skills under real pressure, and everyone else practices describing an idea when the obvious word is off the table.

Students identify mystery vocabulary by interpreting ASL clues from their classmates.

02 Materials & Skills

Materials

- Vocabulary cards or a slide to display
- A chair facing away from the board or screen
- Timer (optional)

ASL Skills Practiced

- Expressive ASL
- Receptive ASL
- Vocabulary recall
- Descriptive language
- Classifiers

03 Setup

1. **Seat one student in the Hot Seat.** The chair faces away from the board or screen so they cannot see the word.
2. **Display one vocabulary word.** Everyone except the student in the chair should be able to read it clearly.
3. **Review the rules before the first word.** No speaking, no mouthing the English word, no fingerspelling the answer, and no signing the vocabulary word itself.

Before You Start

Position the chair so the student in it can see the whole class, not just the front row. They are reading several signers at once, and a seat angled into a corner makes an easy word feel impossible.

04 Directions

1. Reveal the vocabulary word to everyone except the student in the Hot Seat.
2. Classmates give ASL clues describing the word.
3. The student in the chair guesses after each clue.
4. Play continues until the word is identified or time expires.
5. Rotate a new student into the Hot Seat and repeat.

The Four Rules, Restated for Students

No voice. No mouthing. No fingerspelling the answer. No signing the word itself. Everything else is fair game — classifiers, role shift, examples, opposites, where you would find it, what you do with it.

05 Suggested Vocabulary Categories

Any category works as long as students know it well enough to describe it three different ways.

- | | | |
|--------------|------------------|---------------------|
| • School | • Animals | • Food |
| • Hospital | • Transportation | • Occupations |
| • Restaurant | • Sports | • Colors |
| • Weather | • Clothing | • Classroom Objects |
| • Family | • Emotions | • Daily Routine |

ALSO SEE

The same four rules power **Game #18: Guess My Word**, where one student describes to their own team instead. These categories also drive **Game #21: Category Challenge** and supply the Level 1 clues in **Game #14: Vocabulary Pyramid**.

06 Variations

Beginning

Use familiar vocabulary and allow picture clues.

Intermediate

Require complete ASL sentences when giving clues.

Advanced

Require classifiers or role shift, and bar closely related vocabulary.

Challenge Mode

Set a one-minute timer, or award bonus points when the word is guessed within three clues. Both push students toward their strongest clue first instead of warming up with vague ones.

07 Assessment Ideas

Observe students for:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Accuracy of descriptions | ☐ Receptive comprehension |
| ☐ Vocabulary usage | ☐ Creativity in finding another route |
| ☐ Use of classifiers and role shift | ☐ Participation and teamwork |

The clue-givers are being assessed as much as the student in the chair. A word guessed on the first try usually means someone described it very well.

Paul's Best Practice

Encourage descriptive communication instead of single-word clues. Students develop stronger ASL skills when they explain an idea from several angles rather than reaching for the one sign that is closest to the answer.

A student who can describe a word three ways knows it better than one who can sign it once.

Why It Works

Students practice circumlocution — explaining a concept in different ways when the exact word is unavailable. It is one of the most useful real-world skills in any language, and it is the thing learners reach for constantly in genuine conversation. Hot Seat also flips the usual dynamic: the quiet student in the chair becomes the one everyone is signing to, and the class has to make itself understood rather than simply be correct.

Quick Tips

- ✓ Choose recently learned vocabulary so clues stay within reach.
- ✓ Rotate students frequently — short turns keep the pressure light.
- ✓ Celebrate creative clues as loudly as correct guesses.
- ✓ Let the class agree on a clue before signing all at once.
- ✓ Keep a card in reserve to swap in if a word stalls completely.

Continue Exploring

Next in the collection:

▶ **Game #14: Vocabulary Pyramid**

▶ **Game #15: Memory Match**

▶ **Game #16: Sign Detective**

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Extend the Activity

Ask the student who just left the Hot Seat to describe the word themselves now that they know it. Hearing the clue they wish they had been given is often the moment the vocabulary sticks.