

50 REVIEW GAMES GAME 20

Sign Simon Says

Watch first, then move

Sign Simon Says adapts the classic game for ASL. Students respond to a signed command only when it begins with SIMON SAYS, which means they cannot react to the vocabulary alone — they have to read the whole utterance before moving. Receptive attention becomes the point of the game.

TIME NEEDED

10–20 minutes

GROUP SIZE

Whole class

GRADE LEVELS

Middle, High, College

01 Purpose & Objective

Develop receptive ASL skills while reviewing vocabulary, grammar, and visual attention. Most review games reward students for recognizing a sign quickly; this one rewards them for watching all the way to the end, which is a different and harder habit.

Students accurately respond to signed directions only when they begin with SIMON SAYS.

02 Materials & Skills

Materials

- Open space for movement
- Vocabulary cards (optional)

ASL Skills Practiced

- Receptive ASL
- Expressive ASL
- Vocabulary recall
- Classifiers
- Non-manual markers

03 Setup

1. **Review the rules of the game.** Most students know the English version, so name the one difference: everything happens in ASL and nothing is spoken.
2. **Explain the SIMON SAYS condition.** Students respond only when the command opens with it, and stay still when it does not.
3. **Practice one or two sample rounds.** Include a command without the prefix during practice so the trap is familiar before it counts.

Before You Start

Make sure every student can see you clearly and has room to move without bumping a desk. In a signed version of this game, a student who cannot see the opening of the command has already lost the round before it starts.

04 Sample Commands

Twelve commands, grouped from simplest to hardest. Add SIMON SAYS to the front of a command — or deliberately leave it off.

VOCABULARY AND FINGERSPELLING

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Sign HELLO. | 2 Fingerspell your first name. |
| 3 Sign three animals. | 4 Count from 1 to 10. |
| 5 Sign your favorite food. | 6 Sign five family members. |

SENTENCES AND QUESTIONS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 7 Use SCHOOL in a sentence. | 8 Ask a WH-question. |
| 9 Describe today's weather. | |

EXPRESSION, CLASSIFIERS, ROLE SHIFT

- | | |
|---|---|
| 10 Show HAPPY with the correct facial expression. | 11 Show a classifier for driving a car. |
| 12 Role shift between two people in conversation. | |

The Prefix Is the Game

These are the actions, not the full commands. Whether you open with SIMON SAYS is the decision you make each time — and dropping it right after three straight commands that had it is what catches a class that has stopped watching.

05 Directions

1. The teacher signs a command.
2. Students respond only if the command began with SIMON SAYS.
3. If the prefix was omitted, students stay still.
4. Continue with a variety of review commands.
5. Pause occasionally to discuss difficult vocabulary or grammar.

Challenge Mode

Let student leaders become Simon. Award bonus points for clear, accurate ASL commands — leading is harder than following here, because the leader has to produce the prefix and the command cleanly enough to be read across the room.

06 Variations

Beginning

Simple vocabulary and one-step directions.

Intermediate

Complete ASL sentences and WH-questions.

Advanced

Classifiers, role shift, sequencing, and cultural scenarios.

07 Assessment Ideas

Observe students for:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Receptive accuracy | ☐ Non-manual markers in responses |
| ☐ Response time | ☐ Watching to the end of a command |
| ☐ Vocabulary knowledge | ☐ Participation after a mistake |

A student who moves early is telling you something useful: they recognized the vocabulary but were not reading the whole command. That is a comprehension note, not a discipline one.

Paul's Best Practice

Keep students in the game after mistakes. Rather than eliminating anyone, take a moment to review the concept and carry on. A student sitting out is a student who has stopped practicing, and the ones who go out first are usually the ones who most need the repetitions.

The goal is learning, not elimination.

Why It Works

Students stay highly focused because they have to watch every sign closely, and the activity naturally improves attention, receptive skills, and visual processing. The mechanism is unusual among review games: students are penalized for responding to a sign they recognized, which trains them out of the habit of catching one familiar word and guessing the rest. That habit is the single biggest obstacle to real receptive fluency, and this game works on it while the class thinks it is just playing.

Quick Tips

- ✓ Increase speed gradually as the class gets sharper.
- ✓ Mix review topics from different units in the same round.
- ✓ Let students take turns leading the game.
- ✓ Vary how long you wait before dropping the prefix.
- ✓ Sign the prefix at the same size and speed as the command.

Continue Exploring

Next in the collection:

▶ **Game #21: Category Challenge**

▶ **Game #22: Conversation Cards**

▶ **Game #23: ASL Pictionary**

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Extend the Activity

Replace SIMON SAYS with a grammatical condition — respond only to commands signed as questions, or only to commands with a negative non-manual marker. The game becomes a grammar check that still feels like Simon Says.