

50 REVIEW GAMES GAME 26

Classifier Challenge

Show the scene, don't say the words

Classifier Challenge builds one of the most important parts of ASL. Students draw a scene card — a car on a winding road, a cup falling off a table — and show it using classifiers rather than naming it. There is no English sentence to fall back on, so students have to picture the event before they can sign it.

TIME NEEDED

20–30 minutes

GROUP SIZE

Pairs, groups, or whole class

GRADE LEVELS

Middle, High, College

01 Purpose & Objective

Develop confidence with classifiers while reviewing vocabulary, spatial relationships, and visual communication. Classifiers are where students most often stall, because there is no word-for-word route through them — which is exactly why a game built around them is worth the class time.

Students accurately select and use classifiers to describe real-life situations.

02 Materials & Skills

Materials

- Challenge cards — print and cut the next page
- Picture cards (optional)
- Timer (optional)

ASL Skills Practiced

- Classifiers
- Expressive ASL
- Receptive ASL
- Spatial awareness
- Storytelling

03 Setup

1. **Prepare the challenge cards or pictures.** Print the next page and cut along the rows, or use photographs of real scenes.
2. **Review common classifiers before beginning.** Use the handshapes and conventions your curriculum teaches, so students are working from one consistent set.
3. **Place students into pairs or teams.** Small groups mean more turns, and classmates get a clear view of the signing space.

Before You Start

Give students room to sign. Classifiers use the space in front of the body to show where things are and how they move, and a student wedged behind a desk cannot show a car climbing a hill no matter how well they understand it.

04 Printable Challenge Cards

Print this page and cut along the rows. Nine scenes and one story card.

1

Show a car driving down a winding road.

2

Describe a person walking up stairs.

3

Show a cat jumping onto a table.

4

Describe rain becoming heavier.

5

Show two people passing each other in a hallway.

6

Describe an airplane taking off.

7

Show a cup falling off a table.

8

Describe a ball rolling under a chair.

9

Show traffic stopped at a red light.

10

Create a short story using at least three different classifiers.

ALSO SEE

Card 10 asks for a narrative rather than a single scene — the natural next step once the first nine are comfortable. Classifiers also turn up as a case to solve in **Game #16: Sign Detective** and in the scene rounds of **Game #23: ASL Pictionary**.

05 Directions

1. A student draws a challenge card.
2. They decide which classifier or classifiers best fit the situation.
3. They demonstrate the scene in ASL.
4. Classmates identify the classifiers used and offer positive feedback.
5. Rotate until everyone has completed several challenges.

Challenge Mode

Give students two challenge cards and have them combine both into a single realistic ASL story, using appropriate classifiers throughout. Connecting two unrelated scenes forces students to establish and hold space rather than resetting between them.

06 Variations

Beginning

One classifier at a time, using simple pictures.

Intermediate

Combine two classifiers in a single scene.

Advanced

A full narrative with multiple classifiers, role shift, and non-manual markers.

07 Assessment Ideas

Observe students for:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Correct classifier selection | ☐ Clarity of communication |
| ☐ Movement and spatial accuracy | ☐ Creativity in solving a scene |
| ☐ Consistent use of signing space | ☐ Participation as signer and viewer |

There is rarely one right answer here. Two students can show the same scene with different classifiers and both be correct — what matters is whether a classmate could tell what happened.

Paul's Best Practice

Encourage students to picture the scene before they sign anything. Classifiers work when a student is thinking about the event rather than translating an English sentence, and a few seconds of visualizing usually produces a clearer answer than launching straight in.

See it first. The signing follows the picture, not the words.

Why It Works

Students move beyond memorized vocabulary and begin communicating visually, which is one of the defining features of ASL fluency. Classifiers cannot be reached by translation — there is no English word for the handshape that shows a vehicle climbing a hill — so every card quietly requires students to abandon the English sentence in their head and work from the picture instead. That shift is difficult to teach directly and surprisingly easy to practice, which is what this game is for.

Quick Tips

- ✓ Use real photographs as prompts once the printed cards run out.
- ✓ Encourage multiple correct solutions to the same scene.
- ✓ Build from simple objects to complex scenarios over several sessions.
- ✓ Ask the viewer to describe what they saw before the signer explains.
- ✓ Let students replay a scene after feedback rather than moving straight on.

Continue Exploring

Next in the collection:

▶ **Game #27: Build the Sentence**

▶ **Game #28: Vocabulary Charades**

▶ **Game #29: Spot the Difference**

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Extend the Activity

Have students write challenge cards for each other based on something they actually saw that week. A scene from the parking lot or the cafeteria carries detail an invented one does not, and students sign it with more conviction because they were there.