

Elementary Openers & Lies

These three games, though seemingly unsophisticated, are effective sentence-making exercises. The goal is for students to generate sentences using vocabulary they know. For this reason, in neither game are points awarded for immediately parroting what the teacher has said.

Elementary Openers

There is a list of sample Elementary Openers for the teacher's reference file on which to model the exercise. To begin the activity, offer a true Opener of your own, such as, "I like spaghetti," or, "I went to Nagoya last month." Each student will try to create a sentence of the same pattern, such as, "I like (*whatever food the student likes*)" or "I went to (*wherever they went and when*)."¹ No hypothetical statements are allowed. Each must be true.

Children play individually, not in teams. Students should raise their hands and, when called upon, make an honest statement; a sentence free of errors earns a chip.

At the end, we ask, "What does Michiko like?" Kenta raises his hand and says, "She likes peaches." Michiko replies, "That's right," (*and Kenta gets a chip*) or, "No, I don't," (*and Kenta loses a chip*¹). If Michiko fails to reply either affirmatively or negatively at once and without prompting, she loses a chip. The child with the most points at the end wins.

Notes on Elementary Openers

- There are no points lost for mistakes, though you may choose to confiscate chips for horsing around.
- No student may earn points by repeating another student's sentence, except if appended with "too" or "either."
- If a child's not getting any chips, we should call him by name to ensure he participates.
- If a mistake is made, we will give a hint or repeat the mistake with question intonation to let the student know where she has gone wrong, not award a chip, and move on to another hand-raiser. On her next turn, the student must attempt the same sentence. If she still can't do it, we provide correc-

¹ Or, if Kenta has no chips, he may be given a red (minus) chip. The next time he scores a point, he'll lose the red.

tion, move on, and give her yet another chance, time permitting, a bit later. In all of this, the aim is for the student to suss out the answer herself and actually learn, or at least to remember after the intervening time of another student's attempt, and not simply to repeat whatever the teacher has just supplied. She may also discover the mistake in her sentence by listening to her peers successfully form sentences in the same pattern. The game thus becomes more student centered.

- If a student mispronounces a word that other students are unlikely to clearly model in their answers, we model correct pronunciation and give him another chance with the same Opener after other students have had a turn.
- No student may earn points for deviating from whatever category of Opener we have defined; e.g. if we begin with a fruit ("I like tangerines"), students should say only which fruits they like, not things like, "I like video games," or, "I like collies." This increases the challenge and encourages students to delve deeper into their vocabularies.
- At any time, a student may raise her hand and ask, "How do you say (*Japanese word*) in English?" Ask the class for a translation, or (if none of the kids know) give one yourself. The student may use the word to try to earn a point on her next turn. If neither teacher nor children know the word, we let the student say, e.g., "I like (*Japanese word*)," award a chip, write the word in our class notes, and come prepared next week with a translation, which we will be sure to teach and to follow up on repeatedly.

Elementary Lies

There are a list of elementary lies and on of junior high-level lies for the teacher's reference manual. Read from these lists or fabricate your own.

Students play individually, not in teams. When you say, e.g., "Apples are black," students raise their hands and one, when called upon, says, "No, apples are red," to earn a chip. Points are not deducted for an incorrect answer.

Periodically, you'll say something true, e.g., "Bananas are yellow." A chip goes to the first student(s) to stand up and immediately say, "That's right." There's no penalty for raising one's hand when not discerning that the sentence is true, but students lose one chip for standing up and saying "That's right" when it is a lie. This is to discourage students from jumping up every time on the off chance of gaining a point. The child with the most chips at the end wins.

Intermediate Lies

The list of Intermediate Lies is used to teach and reinforce English grammar of the level taught in Japanese public junior high schools. But these lies can be used with our elementary-aged students starting in or around the 6th Rank. In Intermediate Lies, unlike the lower-level game, some lies (separately grouped) are corrected by simple refutation, rather than a correction of the original false statement. Examples:

- *Correction*

Teacher: "I'm a man."

Student: "No, you're a woman."

(Note the more complex grammatical transformation needed in the answer.)

- *Simple refutation*

Teacher: "Fish don't swim."

Student: "Yes, they do."

To avoid confusion, students should be given a "heads up" model before making a switch between statement/response types.

There are two noteworthy differences from Elementary Lies:

1. Most Elementary Lies require only one bit of mistaken information to be substituted into the teacher's initial falsehood. For example, "Apples are black" is changed to, "Apples are red." In contrast, most Intermediate Lies (especially of the 'Correction' variety) can require multiple transformations in the answer. For example, the teacher holds up her notebook and lies, "**This** is *my* wallet." A student's answer: "No, **that** is *your* notebook." Note that there have been three substitutions: **this** became **that**; *my* became *your*; and wallet became notebook.
2. The response to a true statement is also more complex. In Elementary Lies, students stand and blurt the all-purpose response, "That's right!" In Intermediate Lies, they blurt a response that is grammatically appropriate to the given lie: "Yes, she does!" "Yes, it is!" "Yes, you can!" etc.

Notes on Lies (Elementary and Intermediate)

- At first, we play the game using lies that are all of the same grammatical pattern, such as those grouped together in the list. In subsequent weeks, we begin to mix lies from various sections of the list.

- If any errors in grammar or word choice are made (or the ‘No’ is neglected), we move on to another hand-raiser without providing correction to the first, in much the same manner as described above with Elementary Openers. The aim in this is to let students discover what is correct from their peers. When a student answers correctly at last, we follow through to ensure that every student understands how the right answer differs from the answers given before. One way to do this is to repeat the correct answer with emphasis on the missed word and have students repeat after you.
- If a student mispronounces her answer, we do not award a point. However, if it’s an error that another child is unlikely to correct, we should model pronunciation before moving on to other students. Pronunciation is more likely than grammar or word choice to need to be taught directly.
- When students stand and say, “That’s right,” you may subtly cheat and award chips to kids who stand a half-second too late, if not doing so would leave slower kids with too few or even no chips at the end of the game.
- In the example above (“Apples are black”), a student may conceivably insist on answering, “Apples are green,” or, “Apples are yellow.” Take this opportunity to teach the word “some.” Don’t award a point, but, a few lies later, lie again about apples (“Apples are purple”) and elicit from that student, “No, some apples are green,” and award a chip. Withholding the chip until the student gives this answer will give him sufficient incentive to learn ‘some.’ Come back to it again later, and not just once or twice.

Rank Requirements & PLS Click

In the 8th Rank, Elementary Openers and Elementary Lies are required. We recommend teaching first Openers, and then Lies, for a trimester each. In the third trimester of the rank, we recommend, either returning to Openers, sticking with Lies, or switching to Grammar-ettes. 8th Rank PLS Click contains exercises to reinforce the first few Opener and Lie patterns on the lists.

After taking a break from these games in the 7th Rank (to play games like Adjectives for Sentences-Making or Quick Response Questions), the Elementary Openers/Elementary Lies/Grammar-ettes elective reappears in the 6th. For about two trimesters, play any mix of these games appropriate to the class and its needs. 6th Rank PLS Click contains exercises to reinforce those patterns on the lists which were not included in 8th Rank Click.

Starting somewhere around the final trimester of the 6th Rank, students are to upgrade to Intermediate Lies. (Upgrading earlier, if appropriate for a class, is no problem.) This carries on into the 5th Rank, where Intermediate Lies is a color-in rank requirement. There is support for these sentences patterns on 5th Rank PLS Click.