

ALPHABET UNO

Rationale

I often play the classic card game UNO with my elementary school students. They love playing the game and don't realize that they are learning numbers and colours in English by sight. For example, after playing the game a few times my students no longer have to count to five on their fingers before saying out loud "Green Five."

I have modified the classic game from numbers on each card to a different letter of the alphabet on each card. Now when my young students play, they are learning the alphabet by sight. They no longer need to sing the ABC song until they get to the letter they want to say.

With adults or high-level teens, I assign a category to each colour. For example, RED=Verb, BLUE=Food, YELLOW=Animal, GREEN=City/Country Name. For example when a player puts down a red 'j' they must say "JUMP."

Procedure

Print out the playing cards. Printing them on to heavy paper helps prevent other players from seeing what you have in your hand. If you don't have a colour printer, the kids love to help out by colouring the cards themselves.

The rules follow the classic UNO card game rules.

The object of the game is to be the first person to finish all the cards in your hand. When you have just one card left, you must say "UNO" out loud. If you don't, and the other players notice before you play your last card you must pick up 2 more cards from the deck.

Deal out any number of cards to each player. The more cards dealt, the longer the game takes. 3 cards to each player takes about 10-20 minutes. 7 cards to each player can take up to an hour. The remaining cards are left in the middle of the players.

The first person can play any letter-card they wish to start the game. The next player must play a card that matches the same letter as the previous or has the same colour. Example: A Yellow "Y" can be played on a Red "Y." A Yellow "Y" cannot be played on a Red "W." A Yellow "Y" can be played on a Yellow "W." Match the colour or the

letter. If a player has two or matching cards in their hand, they can be played at the same time.

Special Cards:

+2 makes the next person pick up two cards.

+4 WILD makes the next person pick up four cards. This card can be played on any colour and also changes the colour of play to owner's choice.

WILD This card can be played on any colour and also changes the colour of play to owner's choice.

X Skip. This card causes game-play to skip the next player.

Reverse This causes game-play direction to reverse.

Speaker This is a new card inspired by the "*Harry Potter*" edition of UNO. The player who plays the 'speaker' card chooses someone else in the group to read out all their cards held.

Adults go nuts playing this game trying to think of words in a category that start with X. There aren't many so my rule is that if the group as a whole can't think of an appropriate word the card is played and the person picks up a new one from the deck to replace it. But there are quite a few cities in China that start with X!

Good Luck and have fun. I've played this game just 3 times with a group of 6 year-olds and they can already say the entire alphabet by sight without having to sing their ABC's.