

Character Building

Prep Time: 0-10 min

Aim: To practice writing characters, with special focus on stroke order
Level: Any level (students only need to know a couple dozen characters to play)
Time: 10-15 minutes (depending on students' speed in producing characters, it could take longer)
Materials: Paper and pens, or blackboards and chalk
Arrangement: Groups of 3 or more students







Description





A game of character writing where students take turns building characters one stroke at a time.

In Class

- 1 Students sit in groups so that everyone can see what is being written.
 - 2 Either students or the teacher writes an initial stroke (e.g. 丿, 一, |, etc.).
 - 3 The first player writes that stroke and adds one more. The strokes *must* be written in the correct order.
 - 4 The next student adds one more stroke. It can be any stroke, but it must be one that is permissible according to stroke order.
 - 5 Play continues in this manner until there are no possible strokes to add at which point the player who can't add a stroke gains one 'strike.'
 - 6 Play stops if:
 - a player can't think of a stroke to add to a character
 - the next player in line thinks they caught a mistake and challenges by saying, “不对吧！”
 - in that case, the player who is challenged must demonstrate that the strokes can lead up to a real character *and* that the strokes are in the correct order
 - if the player successfully defends against the challenge, the challenger gets one strike
 - if the challenger was correct, the player gets one strike
 - 7 The game continues until an appointed time and the player with the least strikes wins.
- or
- Players are removed from the game when they get a set number of strikes, in which case the last player remaining is the winner.

Examples

Student 1 starts	Student 2 adds a stroke	Student 3 adds a stroke	Student 4 adds a stroke	Student 5 fails to add a stroke	Student 5 gets an X It was possible to continue if Student 5 only knew...
					

Student 1 starts	Student 2 adds a stroke	Student 3 adds a stroke	Student 4 cannot add a stroke	Student 4 gets an X.	Student 4 could have challenged Student 3. Then Student 3 would have been stuck.
					

Student 1 starts 丨	Student 2 adds a stroke 凵	Student 3 adds a stroke 口	Student 4 adds a stroke 口丨	Student 2 challenges 不对吧!	Student 4 finishes a character 喝	Student 2 gets an X because Student 4 correctly completed a character
Student 1 starts 丶	Student 2 adds a stroke 丶	Student 3 adds a stroke 宀	Student 4 adds a stroke 宀一	Student 2 challenges 不对吧!	Student 4 finishes a character, but... 字	Student 4 gets an X because the stroke order was incorrect

Variations

- ✓ To keep things from dragging, you can set a time limit for students to add an additional stroke.
- ✓ Players can add any stroke, even if it is not in proper order, as long as they can re-write the character incorporating that stroke in the correct order.
- ✓ If you want to have a relatively quick competition, you could do this at the blackboard with the students standing in a line, taking turns adding strokes, while you run a countdown of five or ten seconds for each turn. Each time a student makes a mistake or can't add a stroke, that student is out of the game and sits down. The last student standing wins.
- ✓ The game could easily be turned into a team competition.
- ✓ The game could be given a co-operative twist by challenging students to write a character with more than x number of strokes, again, insisting on correct stroke order.

Note

It works best if the teacher refrains from commenting on errors until a round of building is finished. This gives the students a chance to see what went wrong and pushes them to carefully observe each other's writing. If the teacher intervenes too quickly, students will simply let the teacher do the thinking, which will greatly reduce the value of the game.

The idea for this game came from an English spelling game which I first learned as 'I challenge' in the book *More Grammar Games* by Rinvoluceri and Davis (Cambridge).