

## BODY GRAMMAR

Language games are fantastic for introducing not-so-beloved language topics like grammar and spelling to students. The Body Grammar game, as the name implies, gets learners moving by having them stand in place and then moving as the game progresses. It is suitable for all school ages and can be used in all language subjects as the level and the degree of differentiation can be adapted to any level or language.

### ● Dr. Saskia Waibel | PHZH



Dr. Saskia Waibel (1970) is a lecturer in Zurich University of Teacher Education's German department. Her interests include travel, theater, modern art, graphic novels, art and film.

#### Instructions for classroom teaching

The game leader calls three people to the front who stand next to one other facing the class. The first person calls off a personal pronoun, e.g. „Ich“ (I), the second person names a verb that goes with it, e.g. „esse“ (eat), and the third person names a suitable complement, e.g. a noun, e.g. „Orangen“ (oranges). Then they say their chosen word one by one (Figure 1).

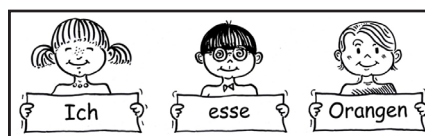


Figure 1: Ich esse Orangen (I eat oranges).

The game leader now explains further rules or procedures: Another person comes forward and inserts their word into the sentence on the condition that the sentence remains complete and grammatically correct. So, for example, this person chooses an adjective: „schöne“ (beautiful). When the person is in the right spot, everyone repeats that word (Figure 2).

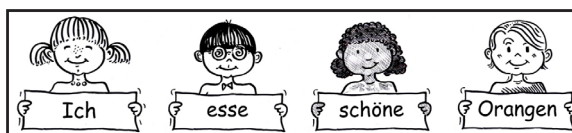


Figure 2: Ich esse schöne Orangen (I eat beautiful oranges).

This process continues: one person after another comes up, stands in the group and with each new person, the sentence is recited aloud. The goal is that every member of the class is up front to make one long, grammatically correct sentence.

If the learners run out of ideas, new rules can be introduced:

- Two people can come up together and form a subordinate clause (or a second main clause).
- Words from other languages can be used.
- Tenses can be changed; other types of sentences can be tested (see “Variations” below).
- One person may also be a name or a punctuation mark (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Ich esse schöne Orangen (I eat beautiful oranges).

## Variations

- Choose a current class topic and use words or phrases from it.
- Focus on a specific grammar or vocabulary topics.
- Some common grammar topics from primary school level German lessons include:
  - o Word types
  - o Sentence types
  - o Sentence structures
  - o Punctuation
  - o Comma rules
  - o Direct and indirect speech
  - o Capitalization
  - o Compound words
  - o Tenses
  - o Cases
- You can swap words or parts of sentences: Someone else is sent to the vacant spot and you take their place.
- A multilingual sentence can be formed from the start and in this case, a discussion should be held about how the grammar changes depending on the language. However, this approach requires a lot of language knowledge on the part of the game leader. “Deine Sprache - meine Sprache” (Basil Schader, 2020) can be a helpful read here.
- Support with written resources: Write words on small posters.
- Competition: Form two groups, each group is assigned as many words as group members. Then, a sentence has to be formed as quickly as possible using the correct word order. This is also possible in several languages. The first group to form the sentence correctly wins.

## Instructions for remote teaching

Similar to puppet or “table” shows (Tischtheater), various bottles and containers (shampoo, creams, hairspray, etc.) can be used in the place of people. The leader of the game attaches pieces of paper with words glued to them to these containers. If necessary, a small platform can be set up in front of the computer so that the containers are visible. Then, only the first containers with the sentence “I eat oranges” are shown (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: Ich esse Orangen (I eat oranges) (remote teaching).

Afterwards, additional bottles and containers with words on them are placed in a row so that a complete sentence can be formed: “I eat big beautiful oranges” (Figure 5). Learners can add suggestions in the chat, and the leader of the game can add them.



Figure 5: Ich esse grosse schöne Orangen (I eat big beautiful oranges) (remote teaching).

The Body Grammar game also works multilingually and can lead to interesting discussions and insights into the syntax of different languages. However, this approach requires a lot of language knowledge on the part of the game leader, as mentioned above (see *Deine Sprache – meine Sprache* by Basil Schader (2020)). Figure 6 shows an example with an Italian personal pronoun (io = I), a French verb (mange = eat) and a Spanish noun (naranjas = oranges) (Figure 6).

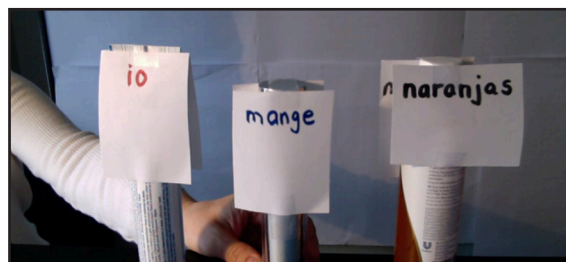


Figure 6: Io mange naranjas (I eat oranges) (remote teaching).

As in face-to-face classes, various language phenomena and grammar topics can be demonstrated in remote classes using the word puppet show (table theater).

### Idea:

Saskia Waibel; 16.3.2021

### Translation:

Laura Loder Büchel

### Illustrations:

Donat Bräm; E-Mail:  
donatbraem@bluewin.ch

### Recommended literature:

Schader, Basil, Hrsg. 2020.  
*Deine Sprache – Meine Sprache. Handbuch zu 19 Migrationssprachen und zu Deutsch.* Zürich: Lehrmittelverlag Zürich.