

# Interactive Improv Games to Teach Soft Skills

These activities were originally published in the article "[CONNECTING WITH GEN Z: USING INTERACTIVE IMPROV GAMES TO TEACH SOFT SKILLS](#)" by Jen Riley & Kate Nicewicz (2022).

Applying improvisation within the classroom allows instructors to teach fundamental concepts through game-like activities. Each of the three games below is designed to be flexible to meet the instructor's needs. These exercises can be used as a mid-class activity to energize students or shift the energy of the class, as a primary activity applied to a specific key concept, or as an in-class activity following the day's lesson to reinforce a concept previously discussed. They can also be used during one class session, spread out during different class sessions throughout the semester, or tailored to fit a range of class modalities such as in-person and synchronous online courses. Educators may reinvent or prolong the games by introducing new prompts, or they may adapt the length of the games provided the minimum is met to achieve a baseline of interaction between students.

## **I Game 1: Building a Story (Listening Game)**

This game challenges students to collaborate by building a story together. Split them into groups of two or three, and give them an open-ended prompt to begin the story. They will then take turns adding to the story, one sentence at a time. The next student will recap what has been said and then add their sentence to build the story. Students will practice active listening, collaboration, and teamwork.

### **Example Prompts**

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"We were sitting in traffic, and the next thing I know ..."

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"I walked up and saw ..."

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"I reached down and found ..."

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## Soft Skills Learned

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Active Listening

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Collaboration

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Attention to Detail

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## Tips for Play

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Make sure the prompt can go in any direction.

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Give students ample time to build an actual story (5 min. or more).

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Debrief at the end and ask a few groups to share their experiences.

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Ask them what came easy and what was hard.

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Connect this to concepts of active listening, attention to detail, and collaboration during the debrief.

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## ■ Game 2: Getting to Know You (Rapport Game)

This exercise is a real-life networking experiential activity. Students network within small groups of two or three to find unique facts, previous or future activities, or class concepts about their partner(s) during a set amount of time. Allocate at least five minutes to allow each student to share. Students will practice active listening, asking key questions, and overcoming awkward interactions.

## Soft Skills Learned

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Active Listening

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Networking

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## Tips for Play

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Pair students who don't already know each other.

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Provide ample time for students to exchange information.

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Set a timer where students can see it and announce when the time is almost up.

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## ■ Game 3: Guess What (Attention to Detail Game)

This activity applies a charades-style guessing game to marketing concepts. Split students into groups of two or three. One student in each group will describe the features (characteristics of the product or service) and benefits (attributions and advantages that the feature provides the user from use) of a common object as “hints” for the other group members to guess the object. Students will practice paying attention to detail, active listening, identifying context clues, deductive reasoning, crafting descriptive imagery, and oral communication.

### Soft Skills Learned

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Attention to Detail

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Active Listening

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## Tips for Play

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Give students examples of clues and let them guess to start the exercise as a class.

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Remind students of concepts as you move through the exercise. Allow ample time (5 min. or more).

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Before breaking into groups, decide how you want to handle non-guesses and incorrect guesses (i.e., does a student lose a turn if they guess incorrectly?).

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