

# Bus Games

## The Alphabet Game(s)

1. Looking at road signs and license plates, each player tries to spot the letters of the alphabet, in order from A-Z, then the numbers 1-26 in order. First one to finish first wins.

2. Player one names one of the following beginning with the letter A: a town, a flower, an animal, a boys' name, a girl's name (the possibilities for this are endless). Player 2 follows with another word, also beginning with A. After the first round, the order of players reverses, and the last person to do A is the first for the letter B. You get a minus point for each letter you skip, and the person with the least minus points wins.

## Scrabble

A variation of alphabet (see above) where each player gives the other a word (of the same number of letters) to fill out from letters along the roadside. The adult can hand out the words or the younger persons can pick words for each other. For added fun, if there is someone patient enough to keep score, you can play with the actual letter point values from scrabble. Cheat hint: Z and X occur much more frequently on the roadside than in written language thanks to the proliferation of exits where you can buy pizza.

## Doubles

A variant on finding numbers on license plates: my father always liked to play Doubles. Start with spotting the digits 0 through 9 in order on the license plates. The other player will be going down from 9 to 0. But next you need to find double numbers: 00 through 99 (or 99 through 00); then triples, and so on. I

remember one long trip in which we got halfway through the quadruples: 0000 through 9999. This game is harder to play, now that vanity plates are so frequent.

## Odd or Even

What are the chances? Game for two players - Have each child guess if there are more license plates that end in an odd or even number. (plates that end in a letter do not count)

1. Give each child a blank sheet of paper and a pencil, or something to mark with.

2. Set a time limit, usually 10-15 minutes.

3. Have one child look for plates that end in an odd number, and the other look for an even number.

4. A tick mark or dash should be marked for each car they find. (For extra learning, have them group the marks in sets of 5)

5. At the end of the time limit, have the children add up their marks. (Counting by 5's if grouping was used)

## Find 100

Choose a color or an object and then count them until you find 100 of that item. Popular Find 100 items are American flags, statues, rivers, water falls, churches, red cars, etc. A competitive variation has each person choose a different item or color of car that passes you, and have a race to 100.

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## I Spy

While everyone knows the regular version, here are some alternative versions for odiously precocious, inquisitive, or anal retentive children:

(1) "I spy a baseball player, president, rock star, movie star, country in Africa, relative, person in our school, etc." Players think of a person, place or thing in whatever category the adult has set for the game. Kids get to figure out with questions like - Does she have a crush on a Backstreet Boy? Did he get shot in office? Was he ever in a Gladiator movie? Is it purple on the map in homeroom?

(2) I Spy a Philosophy or World Religion Does it allow for free will? Does it begin from a philosophical premise that all are created equal? Does it require you to march or carry banners? Does their hero's first name rhyme with "fine"? Does it have a supreme being? Are there special diet rules? Do they have neat gods and monsters that smite people?

(3) Reverse I Spy

The guessers tell the chooser something about what s/he has to spy; you've got to think of something that's blue! Or soft! Or made of metal!

## Sweet and Sour

Each kid chooses a window. Whenever a car goes by, wave and smile. If the person waves or smiles back (sweet), you get a point. If the person frowns or ignores you (sour), no points. The kid with the most points at the end, wins.

## Padiddle

First person to spot a car having only one operational headlight says "padiddle!" False alarms are minus two points. Think up your own prizes.

## Categories

Our favorite game is "the category game." One person thinks of a category, then we take turns naming items that fit in the category. When one of the participants can't name another thing in the current category, s/he is out; the game continues until one of the last two players can't continue. But the other player doesn't "win" unless s/he can name at least one more item in the category.

A large part of the fun is thinking up the categories. In our 10 years of driving back and forth to the cabin (1-1/2 hours each way) we've come up with: characters on The Simpsons, cities (or countries) that begin with "B", things that are yellow, trees, brands of computers, cartoon shows, plus about a hundred others I can't remember. The game can be tailored for the participants. The only category we've outlawed is "numbers between one and three; I start!"

## What?

Our family's ultimate favorite was "What \_\_\_\_?". When it is your turn you announce the topic by stating it, "What animal is...clue. clue, clue...?" Or "What fairy tale is..clue, clue, clue?" Or "Which relative....sucks their teeth after dinner and farts and blames the dog....". We love this game because each round has a new twist.

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## Ghost

You spell out words, the first person says a letter and the next person has to add a letter and you continue in a certain order adding letters. The trick is that if you add a letter and the string can't be completed to make a word, you lose; but if you add a letter and make the string a complete word, you also lose. For example there were three of them, and one started with E... the next gave X... then T... then O... now if the next person said L they lose because now it is EXTOL which is a complete word. But if they said for example P then they can be challenged to come up with a word that starts in EXTOP... (I don't think there is any) and then they would also lose.

## Guess the number

Let your child think of a number between a stated range of numbers. You try to guess the number by asking questions. Here's a sample of how it might go: Your child: I'm thinking of a number between 1 and 100. You ask: Is it more than 50? Your child: No. You: Is it an even number? Child: No. You: Can you divide this number into three equal parts? And so forth. After you have guessed the number, let your child guess a number that you are thinking of by asking similar questions.

One benefit of this game is that, by asking questions about numbers, it helps the child to develop an understanding of some concepts, characteristics and meanings of numbers. If your child doesn't know the difference between odd and even numbers, this is an opportunity to explain and help them understand.

## Howdy Doody

I say a name and you use either the first or last name to make another one. Names have to be familiar to all of the players with the grown up in charge as the ultimate referee as to whether little sister could REALLY be expected to know Karl Marx. So I think of Will Smith, and you say Will Rogers and Grandma says Mister Rogers and Grandma says Mister Clean and so on and so forth. Named because if you ever get to Howdy Doody you've obviously lost. For adults who have consumed adult beverages it's fun to skip a name so that the name receiver gets to figure out the missing link. Wit and outrageousness count, with adults or children. (Bull Durham to Howdy Doody by way of Bull Doody is a sure winner.)

## A Variation

Pick a subject (animals for example). Person 1 names an animal (cat). Person 2 now must name an animal that starts with the last letter of the previous word (turtle). etc etc. Brush up on your animals that begin with 'E' and 'T'.

## Silent Game

The winner is the one who can remain silent the longest. Kids often make goofy faces, non-speaking body noises, etc. to get the others to laugh out loud.

## What did I bring on my trip?

Start this game out by saying, "I'm going on a trip and I'm bringing..." . The first player should name an item that starts with the letter "A". After "A" , the next player will say the same thing but with the letter "B", and so on.

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## Are We There Yet?

Try grappling with the Are we there yet? questions with a little diversionary questioning of your own. Ask your child questions about how far you're traveling. Yards? Miles? Kilometers maybe? How fast are we going? If it's 3:15 now, and it takes us two hours to get there, what time will we arrive? How far have we gone?

Some of the other activities you might try while in transit are to have the kids watch for numbers on streets and buildings, phone numbers on the sides of trucks and other vehicles, dates on buildings, or business signs with numbers in them.

## Twenty Questions

Think of an object, it can be anything as long as it is general. The first question the players will ask is: "Is it classified as Animal, Vegetable, or Mineral", or you can do "Person, Place or Thing". The players can then ask anything they want about the object as long as you are able to answer "yes" or "no" to their question. They try to ask questions that will help them narrow down their ideas until they are able to guess the object. If they can do it in less than 20 questions, they win!

## Play Favorites

This one is a good conversation starter. Go around the car and ask each person their favorite color. Then have everyone think of different "favorite" questions for the group. What's your favorite... movie, flavor of ice cream, song, game, toy, place to visit, restaurant, book, animal, fish, etc. Be creative and don't forget to ask the driver too!

## Fortunately-Unfortunately

This game helps teach kids to look at the bright side of things in a silly way. For example, you say, "Unfortunately, there's a tiger in the car." Your son says, "Fortunately, he doesn't eat boys." Your daughter says, "Unfortunately, he's looking at me and licking his lips." You say, "Fortunately, I brought along my tiger-jaw-clamper." And so on, alternating between fortunate and unfortunate things. An added bonus - it's a real hoot to hear a 2-year-old use the word "unfortunately"!

## Monster Mix and Match

Equipment: a pencil or pen for each player, and some sheets of medium-sized unlined paper.

- 1) Each player takes a piece of paper and folds it into thirds so that the folds are perpendicular to the long edge.
- 2) Starting at the top, draw the head and neck (or corresponding body parts) of a monster, alien, teacher, or other odd creature. Extend the two lines of the neck across the fold into the next third of the paper so the next person can see where to attach the midsection. Tuck the finished drawing inside the folds so the next player can't peek and see what sort of monster you started.
- 3) Exchange papers with the other players. Draw the midsection (body, arms, tops of legs) on the middle third of the paper, extending the lines for the legs (2 of them, anyway) into the bottom section.
- 4) Exchange papers again and draw legs (or whatever) on the last third.
- 5) Open up the papers and pass them around.