

## About the Authors

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**Ellen Muench**, M.S., CCC-SLP, graduated with her masters in Communication Disorders and Sciences from California State University of Northridge. She spent three years as a special education teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District, working with children with severe language impairments. Ellen then worked in a private clinic for a year providing collaborative services for the birth-to-three population. Ellen currently works in a school district in the state of Washington and runs a small, private practice where she has gained extensive experience working with children with autism and Asperger's syndrome.



**Sharlet Lee Jensen**, M.S., CCC-SLP, graduated with her masters in Speech-Language Pathology from the University of Washington in Seattle. She worked for four years in early intervention, gaining extensive experience working with families of children with autism spectrum disorders, apraxia, hearing impairments, general language delays, and articulation/phonological delays. Sharlet then

spent a year in an elementary school where she gained additional experience working with children with high-functioning autism and Asperger's syndrome, word-finding impairments, and early literacy delays. She believes strongly in providing a structured, step-by-step approach to achieving a child's communication goals while capitalizing on a child's personal interests and strengths. Outside of work, Sharlet enjoys riding horses, hiking, and playing with the animals on her small farm in Arlington.

## Introduction

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Figurative language is an important part of student communication and is embedded throughout general conversations, classroom discussions, and literature. A study by Kerbel and Grunwell (1997) revealed that teachers use an average of 1.73 idioms per minute. This puts students who have language impairments at a distinct disadvantage in the classroom, as they find it difficult to use context to understand implied meanings (Rinaldi, 2000). When students cannot recognize figurative expressions, when they cannot comprehend intended meaning from context, and when they don't ask for clarification, they miss a significant portion of the meaningful dialogue that occurs in their daily lives. This can mean the difference between academic success and failure.

Students with language impairments need specific instruction to understand and use figurative language (RCSLT, 2005). *Figurative Language Card Games* provides a fun, motivating format to help these students understand others and communicate more effectively by teaching them to recognize and interpret implied meanings for the following types of figurative language:

- Idioms — expressions that mean something other than the literal meanings of their individual words. Students who do not understand idioms often misinterpret the speaker's meaning and may respond in a manner which is off-topic or inappropriate.
- Indirect Language — a statement or a question that implies a different meaning. Students who have difficulty interpreting indirect language often think someone is asking their opinion or making a general statement.
- Similes — direct comparisons of two unlike things that are often introduced by the words *like* or *as*
- Metaphors — implied comparisons of two unlike things that do not use *like* or *as*

*Figurative Language Card Games* is made up of four decks of playing cards—two decks of idioms, one deck of indirect language phrases, and one deck of similes and metaphors. Each deck contains 52 suited cards. Each card holds a short, narrative passage which

includes a figurative language phrase. Students use context clues within a passage to help them answer a multiple-choice question that addresses the meaning of the targeted phrase. Students will enjoy self-checking their answers by using the decoder.

The cards can easily be adapted to meet the individual needs of each student. Use the decks individually, or select cards from different decks to create a customized card deck that includes all of the figurative language forms. In addition to playing the games, you may also use the cards for drills and practice activities with your students. Track your students' progress by using the Data Collection Sheet on pages 10-12.

We hope you and your students enjoy the time you spend together playing these games. Have fun!

Ellen and Sharlet

Kerbel, D., & Grunwell P. (1997). Idioms in the classroom: An investigation of language unit and mainstream teachers' use of idioms. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 13(2), 113-123.

Rinaldi, W. (2000). Pragmatic comprehension in secondary school-aged students with specific developmental language disorder. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 35, 1-29.

Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists. (2005). *RCSLT clinical guidelines*. London: RCSLT.

## Strategies

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Some additional activities that encourage development of figurative language include:

- Have your students look for examples of figurative language in books, comic strips, newspaper advertisements, and TV commercials. Ask them to keep a journal of these expressions, log each phrase's meaning, and use the phrase in a sentence.
- When working one-on-one with your students, use "click or clunk" to check the student's comprehension and interpretation of figurative language phrases. When the student encounters a phrase that has a non-literal meaning, ask him what he thinks it means. If the student's response makes sense, it "clicks."

If his response doesn't make sense, it "clunks." Use any incorrect answer as a teaching opportunity.

- Pose similes and metaphors as questions to generate student thinking. For example, ask, "How is a cloud like a pillow?" "How can a tire be like a pancake?" or "How is solving a mystery like putting together a jigsaw puzzle?"
- Have your students make a list of figurative language expressions and brainstorm possible meanings for each expression.
- Coach your students to consider a speaker's facial expression and body language to help them determine implied meanings.

## How to Play

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### Game 1: War

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**Players:** 2

**Object:** to accumulate the most cards

#### Setting Up

Choose one or more decks of cards. Shuffle the cards and divide them evenly between the two players. Each player places his stack of cards facedown in front of him.

#### Playing the Game

Each player simultaneously flips over his top card and places it faceup on the table. The player who turns over the card with the highest point value must answer the questions on both cards. If the player gives an incorrect response, he places the corresponding card on a "no-win" pile. If he answers a question correctly, he keeps the corresponding card. If both players turn over cards that have the same value, each player attempts to answer the question on his own card. If he is correct, he keeps the card. If he is incorrect, the card goes on the "no-win" pile. The player who has the most cards at the end of the game or at the end of a predetermined amount of time is the winner.

#### Variation

If a player does not answer a question correctly, you can allow the other player to "steal" the card by giving the correct answer.

## **Game 2: Left, Right, Center**

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**Players: 2 or more**

**Object: to accumulate the most points**

### **Setting Up**

Choose one deck or mix selected cards from different decks together to form one complete deck of cards. Shuffle the cards and place three cards facedown, side-by-side in front of the players.

### **Playing the Game**

The first player chooses one card (left, right, or center), turns it over, and answers the question. If he answers correctly, he keeps the card. If he gives an incorrect answer, the player to his left may steal the card by answering the question correctly. If neither player gives a correct answer, place the card in a "no-win" pile. Then place another card facedown in the empty space, so the next player has three cards to choose from.

At the end of a predetermined amount of time, players add up the point values on their cards. Aces are worth one point, twos through tens are worth their face value, and face cards are worth 10 points. The player with the most points wins.

## **Game 3: Concentration**

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**Players: 2 or more**

**Object: to accumulate the most pairs**

### **Setting Up**

Choose one deck. Use the entire deck or select any number of numerical pairs (e.g., two 4s or two queens). Shuffle the cards and place them facedown on the table so no card touches another.

### **Playing the Game**

The first player turns over one card for all players to see and then answers the question. If he answers incorrectly, his turn is over and he returns the card facedown on the table. If he answers correctly, he turns over a second card in hopes of making a match. If the second card does not match the first card, the player returns both cards facedown on the table and play proceeds to the player's left. If the second card does match, the player must answer the second question correctly to claim the pair.

If the player does not answer the question correctly, he returns both cards facedown on the table. If he answers correctly, he takes the two cards and places them faceup in front of him. He continues to play until he misses a question or turns over two cards that do not match.

Play continues until there are no cards left on the table. The player with the most pairs is the winner.

## **Game 4: It Suits Me**

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**Players: 2-4**

**Object: to collect one card of every suit**

### **Setting Up**

Choose one deck. Shuffle the cards and deal two cards to each player. Place the remaining cards in a facedown pile within reach of all players. Turn the top card over to start a discard pile.

### **Playing the Game**

The first player draws a card from the pile, places one card from his hand faceup in front of him, and answers the question on the card. If he answers the question correctly, the card becomes “protected” and remains in front of him throughout the game. If he answers the question incorrectly, he places the card on the discard pile. (Note: A player should never have more than two cards in his hand at one time.) Play then passes to the player on his left.

During the first round, all players will be able to play a card. Strategy comes into play as rounds progress and players try to collect one card of every suit. In subsequent rounds, players may either draw a card from the pile or take the top card from the discard pile. A player may only take a card from the discard pile if he can play it. In other words, if the top card on the discard pile is a club and the player already has a club showing in front of him, he may not pick up the card.

The first player to collect one card of each suit wins.

### **Variation**

Increase the length and difficulty of the game by having students collect two cards of each suit. Deal five cards to each player for this variation.

## Game 5: Face Off

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**Players: 2 or more**

**Object: to accumulate the most points**

### Setting Up

Choose one or more decks of cards. Shuffle the cards and divide them evenly among the players. Have each player place his stack of cards facedown in front of him.

### Playing the Game

The first player turns over his top card and answers the question. If he answers correctly, he places the card faceup in front of him. If he answers the question incorrectly, his turn is over and he places the card in a “no-win” pile. Play then passes to the player on his left.

At the end of a predetermined amount of time, players add up the values on their cards. Aces are worth one point, twos through tens are worth their face value, and face cards are worth 10 points. The player with the most points wins.

### Variation

If a player does not answer a question correctly, you can allow the other player to “steal” the card by giving the correct answer.

## Data Collection Sheet

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Use the Data Collection Sheet on pages 10-12 to track your student’s day-to-day progress. The collection sheet is arranged by number and suit, so you can present the stimulus items in order or quickly locate the items you are scoring during game play. During scoring, you may insert the targeted phrase or leave that column blank. If you leave it blank, you can easily find the phrases at a later time by referring back to the specified cards in the deck. There is also a column for notes to help you track and determine a pattern of errors.

When a student answers a question correctly, mark “1” in the Score column. When he answers incorrectly, mark “0.” Tally the number of correct items and the total number of items attempted for each suit (e.g., Hearts 2/5). Transfer the subtotals to their corresponding spaces at the end of the form. Total the columns and then divide the total number of items correct by the total number of attempted items to get a percentage correct. Criterion for success is 80%.

## Sample of Completed Data Collection Sheet

Name: A. J.

Date: 5/21/09

Deck: Idioms 2

	Targeted Phrase	Score	Notes
2 ♥			
3 ♥	<i>let the cat out of the bag</i>	0	<i>gave literal meaning</i>
4 ♥	<i>catch some z's</i>	1	
5 ♥			
6 ♥			
7 ♥	<i>my heart is breaking</i>	1	
8 ♥	<i>once in a blue moon</i>	0	<i>confused by "blue moon"</i>
9 ♥			
10 ♥			
J ♥			
Q ♥			
K ♥	<i>throws a fit</i>	0	<i>chose literal meaning for "throw"</i>
A ♥			
	♥ Subtotal	2/5	

## Scoring Sample

	# Items Correct	# Items Attempted
♥ Subtotal	2	5
♦ Subtotal	4	6
♣ Subtotal	2	3
♠ Subtotal	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>
Total % Correct	63%	



# Data Collection Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Deck: \_\_\_\_\_

	Targeted Phrase	Score	Notes
2 ♥			
3 ♥			
4 ♥			
5 ♥			
6 ♥			
7 ♥			
8 ♥			
9 ♥			
10 ♥			
J ♥			
Q ♥			
K ♥			
A ♥			
	♥ Subtotal		

	Targeted Phrase	Score	Notes
2 ♦			
3 ♦			
4 ♦			
5 ♦			
6 ♦			
7 ♦			
8 ♦			
9 ♦			
10 ♦			
J ♦			
Q ♦			
K ♦			
A ♦			
	♦ Subtotal		

**Data Collection Sheet, *continued***

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	<b>Targeted Phrase</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2 ♣			
3 ♣			
4 ♣			
5 ♣			
6 ♣			
7 ♣			
8 ♣			
9 ♣			
10 ♣			
J ♣			
Q ♣			
K ♣			
A ♣			
	♣ Subtotal		

	<b>Targeted Phrase</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2 ♠			
3 ♠			
4 ♠			
5 ♠			
6 ♠			
7 ♠			
8 ♠			
9 ♠			
10 ♠			
J ♠			
Q ♠			
K ♠			
A ♠			
	♠ Subtotal		

**Data Collection Sheet**, *continued*

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	# Items Correct	# Items Attempted
♥ Subtotal		
♦ Subtotal		
♣ Subtotal		
♠ Subtotal		
<b>Total</b>		
Total % Correct		

19-10-98765432