



## Motivating Children

Motivating children in the classroom today is a daunting task for many reasons. One is that education is not a priority in the homes of many families like it was 20 – 30 years ago. Another is kids today are distracted with I-pods, Blackberries, and all kinds of technical gadgets that seem to be permanently attached to their hands at all times. They are used to entertaining, fast paced, action packed activities. Also, television, as much as I love it, is partially to blame for training kids to have attention spans of 10-15 minutes and then “go to commercial” and need a break that is often accompanied by eating. Considering all these factors and the many more not mentioned, teachers today have a difficult task of simply holding the attention of their students, let alone teaching them! I think all teachers agree that motivating children is a huge challenge.

So what can we do to reach these kids of today? I have found after 20 years of teaching that the best way is to make learning fun. How do you do that, you ask? I turn my lessons into games. I give my students what they want – to have fun. Why fight them when you can join them?! And guess what? I have fun too! We all have fun; they learn at the same time – it’s a win-win!

Since I first started in my teacher training classes, I was looking for hands on tools to take into the classroom to make learning fun. What I actually got was a lot of theory. Let me say that a little theory goes a long way, and educational classes would help the beginning teachers by giving more practical tools we can use immediately in the classroom. Since I didn’t find them in college, I kept looking while teaching. I tried commercial educational games that cost me most of the meager classroom budget. And you guessed it; they didn’t work. The kids didn’t like them, and if they did, they got bored with them after one or two times of playing them. And don’t get me started on the directions of how to play the games! It would take half the class period to just explain the rules, and sometimes I even got confused!

What really got me thinking about creating my own games came about in a very interesting way, and not from being in the traditional classroom. It happened while I was teaching swimming, and the classroom, of course, was the swimming pool. (I had my own swim school for 10 years and have been teaching swimming for about 20 years.) I found by making swimming lessons fun and making games to teach swimming skills, that my children got over their fears and learned at a rapid rate. Plus, they had fun. So when I went back into formally teaching in the classroom, I used the same philosophy of learning – make it fun and successful. And it worked!

After many years of compiling and perfecting my strategies, I wrote a book, [How to Motivate the Unmotivated Student™](#). I am now happy to be sharing my style of teaching with all of you who are interested in this fun and effective way of teaching and motivating children.