

# Getting Great Results with AGO Q&A Aqua

AGO Q&A cards contain more than a year's worth of grammar and vocab in a deck, but as kids are eager and motivated to play well, even first year students can master AGO Aqua in a year, and it's not all that uncommon for kids to take it upon themselves to race through all three Q&A decks in that time! Success is to a large degree just a simple matter of setting things up right, keeping it fun and having a good plan.

Of course, first year students of English have their own unique set of challenges, which teachers need to accommodate, and at first glance, AGO Aqua Q&A may seem like too much of a leap. This is where good teaching technique and a well thought out lesson plan comes in. In simplest terms, the key is keeping difficulty at a manageable level, and building upon skills week by week.

**Note: these tips are written primarily for teachers using AGO Q&A in small groups up to about seven.**



## Tip 1: Play “Quiz Show” to introduce the vocab and grammar in AGO Q&A.

Quiz Show is a fun and effective way to practice the AGO grammar structures, and most importantly, **it doesn't require the ability to read!** It only takes 5-10 minutes a lesson, so consider making it a regular part of your lesson warm-up.

**How to play:** Basically, the teacher selects relevant question cards from the AGO Aqua deck. They read a question from a card, show students the card, after which they raise their hand (or push a buzzer) to answer. If correct, they collect the card. If not... well, there's your cue to help them out a little – perhaps offering hints and extra info if needed. Most cards at the end, wins!

### Expert tips:

- Start slow (with just a few of the easiest questions), and add a question or two to the mix every lesson.
- You can ask the same question several times in a row (perhaps making slight changes each time) to reinforce a grammar point, and give other students time to catch on - naturally, the meaning becomes clearer with each repetition. Give out “action cards” to subsequent students that answer the same question (so that they receive points, too).
- Try to involve all students equally.
- Later, you can add new rules to the game (such as making each card worth its stated point value) –i.e. a #9 card is worth 9 points.

## Tip 2: Work hard on getting reading skills up to speed as quickly as possible.

There are countless reasons why teaching students to read and write is very important. AGO Q&A cards are pretty good reading practice once students are ready for them (in that they contain a lot of high frequency sight words), but there's plenty of work to be done getting their skills up in the meantime. The fastest and easiest way to get students to that stage is through teaching phonics.

***Here's the bones of a weekly lesson outline that fosters rapid reading progress:***

- Play **Quiz Show** for 5-10 minutes as part of the warm up (*for grammar, speaking and vocab practice*).
- Play an **AGO Phonics** game for 10 minutes (*for the vocab, and to help pre-teach phoneme function*). Ideally, you will progress through Phonics Aqua and Green levels over the course of the year.
- Work through **a phonics course book** for about 15 minutes per lesson (to develop reading, writing and listening skills). There are, of course a multitude of great phonics course books to choose from!
- Spend an additional 10 minutes or so working through **a "phonics reader"** in class (*for reading fluency*). *You should also get students to practice reading a section as part of homework.*
- And, of course, as you see fit, incorporate a variety of **other learning activities**, games, songs, TPR activities, flashcards, topical vocab, art and craft, etc.
- **Set weekly homework which includes reading and writing practice** (e.g. get students to take home readers; require students to re-read pages from their course book, fill in a page from an exercise book. Ideally you will get parents involved, too).

**Sight words Tip:** There are about 80 written words on the AGO Q&A Aqua deck, about half of which are high frequency "sight words" – i.e. key words to learn, that aren't phonically "regular". You can download and print flashcards of these words to play practice games with, free from the AGO website.

**Tip 3: Only allow English when playing AGO, and penalize students if they break this rule!**

***This is key***, and makes **HUGE** difference! Also, it's much easier to implement than you might think! In fact, students enjoy the drama and challenge once they get used to it. Plus, if you can get students into English only mode for the 15 minutes they play AGO, it's not hard to keep them there for the rest of the lesson!

**Expert tips:**

- Be clear and consistent in applying this rule, but don't be so strict as to ruin the game. You can give out "yellow cards" as warnings for example.
- Encourage students to catch each other (and you) out! I.e. if you are about to win the game, and then you "accidentally on purpose" blurt out something in your student's language and get penalized, you'll make their day!

**Tip 4: Raise the bar as students improve:**

Learning happens in stages. Good teachers understand this and manage difficulty accordingly. In other words, go slow at the beginning and set simple, manageable learning objectives, which are adjusted to remain challenging as students improve.

***Some ideas:*** Add a few new cards from the next AGO level up; Require students to cover the card text and make eye contact as they ask and answer; Give bonus points for perfect answers.

Besides that, bear in mind that there are many ways to use the AGO cards besides playing "Crazy 8's". Some games like **Rock Scissors Paper, Top Hand**, or the **Interview game** (check the AGO website for rules) get all players interacting at the same time, and encourage speed and fluency – so they work really well with students that have mastered the basics.

***Best of Luck! And if you have any great tips that you think others would appreciate, please be let us know!***

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