

The Nutritional SCATTERGORIES® Game: Adding Zest to a Nutrition Course

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INTRODUCTION

Unlike some educational games that aim to “teach” concepts (eg, the Food Guide Pyramid), the Nutritional SCATTERGORIES® game was the creative work of 3 students in an introductory nutrition course. The game provided an excellent forum for the recall of nutrition terms at the end of the semester. It was a fast-paced, timed, brainstorming, review session adapted from Hasbro Games’ popular SCATTERGORIES game (Figure 1).^{*} At lunchtime (11:45 AM), with class nearly over, the students were pleading to play one more round! Surely, this called for a second look! Three aspects of this adapted game appear to make it an excellent addition to a nutrition (or other health) class: a change of pace, the element of competition (at the end of a semester when students have become better acquainted), and a sense of mastery that comes with reviewing.



Figure 1. The SCATTERGORIES® game.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This introductory nutrition course included male and female students of all majors throughout the university. The SCATTERGORIES game was designed for “ages 12 to adult,” and, if questions were developed to be culturally appropriate for the age and reading level, the Nutritional SCATTERGORIES game might be useful for a wide range of ages and a variety of courses.

GAME DEVELOPMENT

One of the group assignments for this introductory nutrition course was to create or adapt a game that could be an effective nutrition education tool for a particular target group. The SCATTERGORIES game is a simple, timed, word recall game with familiar topics such as “things found in the ocean,” “animals,” and “personality traits.” Players compete to list the most words starting with a preselected letter. The Nutritional SCATTERGORIES game “developers,” one of whom was a nutrition major (J. R. M.), re-designed the SCATTERGORIES game category cards to reflect different public health nutrition and food topics on

each card. More cards could be added as needed to introduce new categories. (See Figure 2 for an example of one of these three cards.) The questions were based on the information from the course text¹ and were of a general nature, from material covered throughout the semester. The cards were also shaped into the form of 3 different foods: apple, broccoli, and a fish.

IMPLEMENTATION

The main purpose of this game was to test students during the final week of the nutrition course for memory of terms and ease of recall. The procedure followed the standard directions, which are well documented and included with the SCATTERGORIES game. Also included in the original game are 12 different category cards, answer pads, writing clipboard folders, a 20-sided letter die (minus the letters Q, U, V, X, Y, and Z) and a 3-minute timer. Briefly, students form 3 groups (“2 to 6 players,” but in the class setting, 6 to 8 per group seemed to work fine), and each group takes a writing folder and inserts the pad of paper into it. The letter die is rolled to establish the letter. The timekeeper picks a list number, and all groups then turn over

Letter “S”

LIST 1

1. Digestive Enzyme
2. Calcium-rich food
3. Cause of overweight
4. A food from the Grain group
5. Food high in protein
6. One consequence of nutritional deficiency
7. A food that a vegetarian might eat
8. A nutrient found in food

ONE

1. sucrase
2. soymilk (fortified)
3. sedentary
4. spaghetti
5. shrimp
6. scurvy
7. sunflower seeds *
8. selenium

Figure 2. Example of a category card (adapted from the SCATTERGORIES game) and corresponding list of suggested answers submitted by 1 of the 3 groups. *Sunflower seeds 2 points (2 words).

the same number of category card, which contains identical lists of nutrition-related topics. The timer is switched on, and the groups begin to fill in as many answers as possible using the topic requested and a word (or words) beginning with the letter selected. When time is up, groups, in turn, give their answers, and any group with a unique answer then circles this winning answer and receives 1 point. If 2 words both start with the chosen letter, an additional point is given. The group with the most points at the end is the winning team.

The game started off with the directions being explained and the class being divided into 3 groups; chairs were rearranged, and the atmosphere was relaxed. As the timer was set and the letter was chosen, the pace quickened, intense discussions were under way, and students wrote energetically. As an observer, I was pleased to hear words that we had covered weeks before, such as "beriberi," "beta-carotene," and "barley." The students also seemed pleased at the terms they had at their disposal, and excited cheers could be heard whenever a clever response was suggested. As far as games go, this one seemed very well suited to the univer-

sity setting, with low levels of individual stress but an adrenaline-surfing period of brainstorming.

This game could be created from scratch, using a simple kitchen timer, small clipboards for writing folders, and letter cards to replace the 20-sided letter die. In a large lecture course, multiple subgroups could be established, each with a respective group leader who would monitor the time and keep score. For example, in a class of 132 students, 6 subgroups of 22 students would create 3 groups of 7 with 1 group leader in each subgroup. Multiple sets and a greater variety of category cards would be preferable to extend the usefulness of the game and also to minimize the tendency for students to hear responses from other groups.

For advanced classes, such as medical nutrition therapy, the topic might be changed from "consequence of poor nutrition," with a possible letter S answer of "skin disease" to the topic "condition associated with malabsorption" and a possible answer of "steatorrhea."

A formal evaluation was not conducted because the aim was not to test attainment of skills but rather to facilitate review and recall of vocabulary learned throughout the semester. Informally, both the simple design of the Nutritional

SCATTERGORIES game and enthusiasm it generated among college students make this game a potentially useful educational tool for adding the thrill of competition to nutrition knowledge acquisition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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ENDNOTE

*Hasbro Games, Consumer Affairs Department, PO Box 200, Pawtucket, RI 02862; Tel: (888) 836-7025. Item #04917, ©1999.

REFERENCE

1. Whitney EN, Rolfes SR, Nutrition and Health Associates. *Understanding Nutrition*. 9th ed. Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning; 2002.