

10 mistakes to avoid

When creating a pedagogical Escape Room to foster language learning, here are several pitfalls to watch out for during the design process:

1. Designing game elements before deciding on the purpose of the ER: You can lose sight of pedagogical targets when the focus is on scenario and enigma creation.
2. Instead: First ask yourself: “What should students have learned by the end of this ER?” to guide you in tying all game elements to the objective of the ER and your students’ needs.
3. Not considering the practicalities of your ER: Every ER has its possibilities and constraints which will influence the feasibility of the enigmas and scenario.
4. Instead: Refer to the “Setting the Practicalities” section of the Framework and Roadmap as guidelines on how to work within your practical limits
5. Lack of consistency between the different game elements: If students are expected to learn about a certain topic, incorporating dissonant elements might be confusing.
6. Instead: Make sure to adapt the characters, elements of cultural heritage, tools and activities to the time and place of the setting for the ER
7. Creating enigmas that don’t match students’ proficiency levels: Simple ERs might bore players; difficult ones might be time-consuming and leave players frustrated.
8. Instead: Save the riddles and brainteasers for more advanced learners, while elementary learners would do well with easier language exercises.
9. Not defining the extent of your role as Game Master: Planning when to intervene in students’ gameplay and when to step back is key for guiding students in the game.
10. Instead: Refer to the resource sheet “Game Master” for suggestions on your role as Game Master before, during and after gameplay.
11. Neglecting to prioritize soft skills acquisition: Even if language goals are being met, pedagogical ERs should not be exercises in individualism and self-reliance.
12. Instead: Incorporate the features of each role in the design of your ER to emphasize interpersonal skills such as teamwork and communication.
13. Failing to create an immersive environment: Although the enigmas and scenario can set the tone for the ER, do not rely solely on them to immerse students in the setting.
14. Instead: For a list of decorations and tools that can serve as immersive elements, refer to the Framework and Roadmap.
15. Creating an ER that is untestable: ERs with elements that are too convoluted or difficult to operate will spoil the entire gameplay for students.
16. Instead: Consider the testability of all segments of the ER during the design process (refer to the resource sheet “How to test your enigmas” for guidelines)
17. Overlooking the needs of students with SLDs: Some ER elements are difficult to use for students with specific needs and could make them feel excluded.
18. Instead: Refer to the chapter about SLDs in the booklet “ER and languages: a perfect match?” for suggestions on fostering inclusivity.

Discounting the importance of student feedback: The ER does not end after gameplay, as student input is necessary for crafting a better learning experience for all.

Instead: Set aside time after gameplay for the Debrief in order for students to reflect on their experience and offer suggestions on how to improve the ER.

References

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