Answers to Exercise 3.1

Using Games and Inconsequential Competition

1. Why do academic games stimulate attention?

Games stimulate situational interest—usually, triggered situational interest and maintained situational interest. Most academic games provide students with clues or hints to questions without providing them with the exact answers. Such situations typically activate the natural human tendency to fill in missing information or to establish closure around something that is incomplete. When a competition is added to academic games, mild pressure provides another stimulus for attention. It is important, however, that competition is just for fun—it is inconsequential. Winning or losing a game should have no effect on students’ grades or test scores. Games should be used as a lighthearted way to review and analyze information.

2. What would be appropriate teacher behavior if many students did poorly on the questions in an academic game?

Games must maintain an academic focus. They can be used as a form of feedback to teachers. If a large number of students do poorly on an academic game, it might be an indication that review or re-teaching of the content is necessary. Games should always be debriefed to determine what students know well. Additionally, games can always be used as a quick review of content.

3. What are some ways you have used games in the past?

Answers will vary.