

Past time expressions snap

Instructions for teachers

Photocopy and cut up the cards below so there is one pack per two or three students. As preparation for the game or as a grammar presentation, get each group of students to arrange their cards into 4 columns by the preposition used when we are talking about the past only (though some “ago” expressions are used with “in” when talking about the future). Check their answers and elicit the different uses: “at” with clock times, “in” with longer times like months and years, “ago” with lengths of time like numbers of hours, “no preposition” with expressions starting or meaning “last” or “this”.

Get the students to shuffle the cards up again, deal the cards between them and put their packs flat down on the table without looking at them. The students now play the traditional card game “Snap” – they take turns showing the top card from their pack, and if it takes the same preposition as the last one their partner turned over the first person to shout “Snap!” takes all the cards that had been turned over up to that point. The game continues until one person has all the cards, making them the winner. If anyone shouts “Snap” when the cards don’t match they have to give two cards from their pack to each of their partners as punishment.

As an additional activity, you can get students to put the cards into time order and tell a story with them.

Cards to cut up/ Suggested answers

IN	ON	AGO	AT	NO PREP.
1955	Monday	eighty years	seven o'clock	last week
July	Monday morning	two days	two minutes past three	last July
the summer	12 March	two decades	midday	yesterday evening
the 1970's	Tuesday 31 January	a week	noon	last night
the 60's	Tuesday morning	one and a half hours	midnight	last Tuesday
the 19 th century	Wednesday afternoon	two and a half months	3 p.m.	this morning
July last year	Friday evening	ninety minutes	a quarter to seven	the day before yesterday
July 1999	Xmas day	thirty seconds	four o'clock in the afternoon	last year
the year two thousand	my birthday	two thousand years	about two o'clock in the morning	last month
1066	Xmas Eve	a few minutes	exactly seven fifteen	yesterday