

The Ultimate Sprouts Teaching Checklist

A one-page guide for parents and educators to introduce the game of Sprouts effectively.

Getting Started Your First Game

- **Surface:** Use a large, clear surface like a whiteboard or a big sheet of paper.
- **Dots:** Begin with only 2 or 3 dots. Keep it simple to build confidence.
- **Explain Slowly:** Walk through the first move step-by-step, explaining as you go.
- **Goal:** Clearly state the goal—the last person to make a legal move wins!

The 3 Golden Rules to Emphasize

1. **The Line:** A new line must connect two living sprouts, OR a sprout to itself (a loop).
2. **The Sprout:** You must add ONE new dot (a sprout) on every new line you draw.
3. **The Limit:** A sprout is "dead" when it has THREE lines connected to it. It cannot be used again. *Bonus Rule: Lines can be as long and curvy as you want, but they can NEVER cross another line!*

Teaching Progression By Age

- **Ages 6-8:** Focus on the basic rules and taking turns. Use 2-3 starting dots. The goal is comprehension, not strategy.
- **Ages 9-12:** Introduce basic strategy. Use 4-5 starting dots. Ask "why" they made a certain move. Introduce simple sprouts puzzles for kids.
- **Ages 13+:** Encourage deeper thinking about long-term consequences and controlling territory on the board.

Common Mistakes to Watch For

- **Crossing Lines:** Gently remind players that lines cannot intersect.
- **Forgetting a Sprout:** Double-check that a new dot is added after every line is drawn.
- **Losing Count of Lives:** Encourage players to put a small tally mark next to a sprout each time a line is added to it.

Fun Variations to Keep it Fresh

- **Team Play:** Kids work in pairs, discussing their moves together.
- **Colored Lines:** Each player uses a different colored pen. The final board looks like art!
- **Timed Rounds:** For advanced players, add a 30-second timer to speed up decisions.