This game is a proposal from the International Association of Educating Cities, (IAEC www.edcities.org) aimed at citizens. It addresses certain values and actions linked to the principles of the Charter of Educating Cities.

The main goal is to encourage reflection on which measures and actions we could undertake individually and collectively to enhance quality of life and foster harmonious living together in the city. Our suggestion is for this game to be accompanied by a discussion among players about the values conveyed by the cards, whether they occur in their city or not, and how we could improve our surroundings, healthcare, the environment, interpersonal relationships, etc.
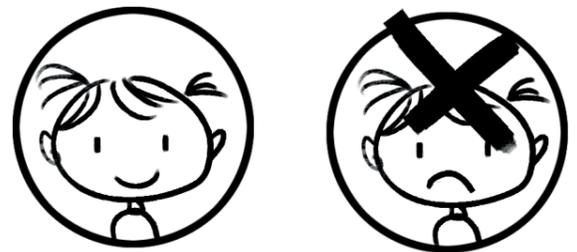
Opposite Matching Game about the Educating City

Rules of the game

Beginner level

For younger ages, we suggest starting the game off with all the cards face up. The aim is to find opposite pairs. To make it easier to find the pairs, the matching cards have the same colour border and feature a symbol related to the idea being conveyed.

Start by making two piles: one for the cards with the symbol crossed out and one for the cards with the symbol not crossed out. Shuffle each pile separately and then place the cards on the table, with each set on a different side.

The game can be played either in a team or individually, in which case the winner is the person who matches the most pairs. The game ends when all the cards have been matched with their opposites.

The person forming a pair has to explain why they consider them to be opposites, which action is the right one, whether any of these situations occur in their city or neighbourhood, and what could be done to improve the situation.

Advanced level

Once players are familiar with the cards or have some more experience, we suggest the following way to play the game. The goal is still to form pairs of opposites, but in this case the illustrations will be hidden.

All cards are shuffled together and placed on the table face down. The first player starts by turning over two cards. If they form a pair of opposites, the player keeps the cards. If they don't match, the player places them face down again in the same position and the next player takes their turn. The game ends when all the cards have been matched up and the winner is the person with the most pairs.

The person forming a pair has to explain why they consider them to be opposites, which action is the right one, whether any of these situations occur in their city or neighbourhood, and what could be done to improve the situation.

Another option

Below is another option to match the cards but with some physical activity involved. Some pairs are selected and the opposites (crossed out symbol) are placed in a row on the floor a few metres away. One card is dealt to each player. The goal is for them to run over to the cards on the floor, find the opposite, grab it and run back as quickly as possible. The person who gets back first with the correctly formed pair wins a point. The game then continues with the other cards. The person with the most points at the end of the game is the winner.

Paint your own game

Paint and colour version also available.

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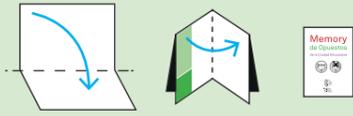
01. Recycling

Recycling vs not recycling and making the city dirty:

With these illustrations you can reflect on our waste separation and recycling habits, the existence of different containers for waste separation, the problems of fly tipping, etc. And how we can contribute to a more sustainable environment by recycling. Do we separate waste at home? Which types of waste do we separate? Which container should be used for each type? Do we know what happens with the waste from the different containers? Are there places in the community where fly tipping takes place? What problems does this lead to? How could we encourage people to throw rubbish into the right containers and separate waste at home?

02. Transport

Using non-polluting transport vs using private cars:

These illustrations allow us to discuss various means of transport and the alternatives to the most polluting ones, as well as the benefits for the environment and our health. We can also include questions about the means of transport most used by players and the possibility of changing transport habits for everyday journeys: do we go to school on foot, by bike or by scooter? What obstacles do we come across? How could we solve them?

03. Accessible City

City accessible for people with mobility problems vs non-accessible city:

Are the streets of our neighbourhoods accessible for people with reduced mobility (elderly people, wheelchair users, babies in pushchairs, etc.)? What are the main obstacles that these people come across? Are there public spaces and transports that have been made accessible to help them get around the neighbourhood and the city?

04. Sustainability

Green city vs highly polluted city:

The debate here can focus on which elements of our cities, neighbourhoods and communities favour the creation of green environments, or where people have quality public spaces where they can play, read, walk and socialise. Meanwhile, pollution is higher in cities where industries fail to follow environmental measures/controls and where cars have priority over people, which makes the air harmful to health and life in public spaces more difficult. Are there vehicle-free boulevards or avenues in our neighbourhood? Do we have green spaces where we can play and meet up with friends? Does our neighbourhood breathe clean or polluted air? Why? Are there more people driving cars or getting around on foot?

05. Public Space

Well-kept public space vs neglected public space:

These illustrations invite us to reflect on the importance of everybody taking care of the public spaces in our community, as this favours their use and enjoyment. Meanwhile, when a space is no longer looked after, it becomes a neglected area of the city which people don't use and which attracts anti-social behaviour. What qualities do you value in public spaces? Are they well-kept spaces? How could we improve public spaces in our neighbourhood?

06. Civic-Mindedness

Helping improve the city vs vandalism:

The city as a shared good in which the engagement of its inhabitants is essential in its upkeep and improvement. At the other end of the spectrum, a city where inhabitants do not care about its upkeep, leading to an increase in vandalism that causes damage to public or private property. Do we help look after our neighbourhood? Can you explain some improvement or upkeep initiatives that you know about or participate in?

07. Engagement

Inclusive vs exclusive engagement:

Are there engagement spaces at our school, in our neighbourhood or in our city where we can express our opinions and be heard? Are they inclusive spaces in which the diversity of citizens can actively engage?

08. Conflict Management

Dialogue vs violence in the event of conflict:

These illustrations invite us to reflect on the importance of using dialogue to resolve conflicts, rather than resorting to violence. The importance of attempting to reach agreements and respecting each other even if we think differently. The possibility of implementing mediation, if necessary, to help resolve a conflict. How do we solve conflicts with other people? Do we use our fists or our dialogue skills? Have you ever mediated a conflict between other people to encourage peace and find a solution?

09. Leisure

Reading vs uncontrolled use of video games:

Reading as a way of accessing culture and fostering imagination. At the other end of the spectrum, the uncontrolled use of video games all day and all night. Reflection may include questions about reading habits (as an individual or a family activity), as well as the use of video games and how to reverse these habits if necessary (mention the harmful effects of addiction to video games, such as disrupted eating habits, lack of sleep, reduction in face-to-face relationships, etc.). What do you do in your free time? Do you like reading, watching TV, playing video games...? How much time do you spend on each activity? What kind of books/video games do you like? Do you go to the library? Why do you think it's important to read?

10. Intergenerational Relationships

Sharing vs individualism:

We live in societies in which relationships between generations are becoming increasingly difficult, so it's increasingly necessary to have spaces and time to get together to share experiences and learn from one another. Some questions that could guide the debate: do we help our grandparents (or other elderly people in our community) to keep abreast of new technologies? What knowledge have we learned from our grandparents?

11. Living Together

Close-knit communities vs segregated communities:

Human beings are social beings by nature. Even though our age, physical features, personality, hobbies, beliefs, etc. make us different from one another, we share the same world. This plurality and diversity can be seen as a source of personal and social enrichment or can lead to disagreements and conflicts. Do our communities foster relationships between different people? At our school or in our neighbourhood, do boys and girls from different backgrounds and cultures play together or do they form separate groups? What can we do to encourage coexistence between different people? What do you think about barriers being created to stop people from rebuilding their lives elsewhere? If you have ever thought about living abroad, how would you like to be welcomed?

12. Sport

Camaraderie in sport vs aggressive sport:

In addition to helping us lead a healthier lifestyle, sport can be a tool to convey certain values such as teamwork, camaraderie, respect for others, fair play, self-improvement, etc. That's why it's important to prevent behaviour patterns which can sometimes appear in the practice of sport, especially when competing and winning at any price become the main goal. Do you play any sports? Is teamwork required? Which values are fostered through these sports? Has there ever been an aggressive situation? How can we stop them?

13. Eating Habits

Access to healthy food vs unhealthy food:

Reflection in this pair of opposites can revolve around the importance of a balanced and healthy diet for good health. Meanwhile, certain foods (fast food, sweets and mass-produced pastries) might be a quick and easy option, but could cause health problems if they become a habit. Everyone has the right to be able to eat healthily. Who cooks at home? Which foods do you eat most often? Do you eat a variety of food groups, including fruits, vegetables, legumes, and so on? How often do you eat sweets or mass-produced pastries? In our city, does everyone have access to food? Are there soup kitchens or associations that collect food for people with fewer resources? Are these initiatives enough to ensure that everyone can eat healthily?

14. Local Economy

Buying at local stores vs buying at large stores:

Do we know the source of the food and items we buy and use? Where do we shop? Who does the shopping? Do we know the product chain of items that we buy at supermarkets and that are often pre-packed? Is it a fair trade product respecting producers and caring for the environment? Is it possible to reduce the use of plastic? What effects does shopping at local stores have on our neighbourhood or city? What are the advantages and disadvantages of online shopping?

15. Access to Culture

Equity vs equality:

Inequality is present in our societies, which means that not everyone can access the cultural and educational opportunities of our community. Therefore, it's not always enough to offer resources that foster culture, but it's necessary to take into account the unequal basis in order to guarantee equal opportunities for people with fewer resources. Do you take part in any cultural activities outside school? What kind of activities are they? Do you think that everyone can access these activities? Do you visit museums with family or friends, in addition to visits organised by your school? And what about plays or concerts? Are they open to all audiences or does the price prevent people with fewer resources from attending?

16. Inclusive and Quality Lifelong Education

Inclusive education vs education for some people:

Is there diversity in schools (boys, girls, people from different backgrounds, etc.)? Do you think that everyone has the opportunities to continue studying what they want? Are there professions mainly done by men or women? Why do you think this is? How can we change these trends? Are there learning opportunities for the elderly? Why is lifelong education important?