

## **FILLING TIME NOT KILLING TIME: 10 GREAT GAMES FOR THE LAST MINUTE**

Types of activities:

- Memory Games, which tend to focus on the recall of a string of nouns, the details of a story or an important sequence of events.
- Fluency Games, which emphasize spontaneous production of rapid but unprepared speech.
- Mysteries and Guessing Games, in the style of ‘Twenty Questions’, which practice question formation and problem-solving abilities.
- Vocabulary Games, which rely on the students’ vocab knowledge, and the ability to apply what they know to unfamiliar words.
- Word and Dictionary Games, which practice important dictionary skills and introduce fun, new words in a less formal context.
- Quizzes, which can test general knowledge or specific language points in a competitive framework, and can be very different from those used for assessments or exams.

### **Recommended activities**

1. “*Twenty Questions*” - the students ask closed questions, preferably in a variety of forms, to discover the animal, country, famous person (etc) you’re thinking of, but the only possible answers are ‘yes’ and ‘no’. Some variants include ‘maybe’, ‘not exactly’.
2. The variation of “*Twenty Questions*” is “*The Phone Box Mystery*”. A man is found dead in a phone box, and the students must ask (up to twenty) questions to discover how he died. They normally ask about his injuries, background and hobbies, what he was doing right before he entered the phone box, and so on, but again the answers must be either ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

3. “*Hangman*” has a place at almost every level, providing one or two letters at the outset, revealing the Part of Speech or the number of syllables in the word, providing a clue as to the lexical group the word belongs to (tools, illnesses, modes of transport, etc), describing the word’s origin, or letting the students know how recently you taught them the word.

4. “*Just a Minute*” - the fluency game, is a great stand-by. The student must speak, as the classic rules say, “Without hesitation, deviation or repetition” for sixty seconds on a subject of your choosing, or that of the opposing team.

5. “*I Went To Market*” is a memory game composed by the whole class. The first student claims, “I went to market and bought a pair of ice skates”. The second adds their own purchase: “I went to market and bought a pair of ice skates and a pet lizard...”

6. “*Kim’s Game*” is another memory challenge. Arrange a dozen or more everyday objects on your desk and invite the teams to spend only one minute memorizing them. Then, sit the students down and, without their seeing, remove one or two objects, invite them back and ask which are missing.

7. “*ORCHESTRA*” - write the word on the board, checking understanding and the number of repeated letters, then invite the students to write down all the words they can make from those same letters.

8. “*Dictionary Treasure Hunt*” invites the students to find very specific words in their dictionaries, either individually or in teams, against the clock.

9. “*Quick Jeopardy*” is a short variant of the TV classic. For the fastest running of this game, prepare all the questions in advance, make sure they’re easy enough that we’ll get quick answers, and hand over to the next team immediately the previous team has answered.

10. “*Finish My Story*” is a sentence-building game which is best played either by proceeding around a circle, or by throwing a ball or bean-bag to the next person.