

## **Taboo Game**

### **Teachers' Notes**

#### **Aim of the Game**

Learners explain lexical items to each other without using the words that would help them do so most easily, forcing them to paraphrase or explain through context. The team that guesses the most items in a given time limit are the winners.

#### **Pre Class Preparation**

If you decide to prepare the taboo cards yourself, write the target language lexical items in the top box of each card. Then add the three words you think are most needed too easily explain this word underneath the IH logo in the bottom box - these are the taboo words.

Make a copy of the cards and cut them up to create a pack of cards for each group of six learners.

If the learners are going to create their own cards, simply copy and cut up the blank handouts so that you have a pack of 24 blank cards for each group of six learners.

#### **Procedure**

First of all, explain to the learners that they are going to revise recently learnt vocabulary through a popular English word game - Taboo. Elicit the meaning of the word taboo and explain how it relates to the idea of the game - the learners have to explain lexis to their team mates without saying certain given words.

Split the class up into groups of three.

If the class are preparing their own cards, give each group half a pack of blank cards - 12 per group.

Ask the learners to choose recently learnt vocab from their notebooks that they want to test their class mates on and to write each item in the top box on the cards. Then they have to work together to choose three taboo words for each item and write the chosen words in the spaces given in the bottom box of each card.

Pair the groups off into new groups of six. Ask the learners to swap the pack of 12 cards they have prepared with the pack of the other team in their group.

If you have already prepared the cards for the learners, give out a pack to each group of six learners.

Explain the learners are going to play the game in teams of three, competing against the other team in their group.

One learner from each team goes first. They have to take a card and explain the word at the top of the card to their team mates without using the taboo words written below it. The team mates have to guess the exact phrase written on the card. One member of the opposing team keeps the time. The other two check the explainer does not use the taboo words. The player explains a total of four different words. When all four words have been successfully guessed by a team the clock is stopped and the time taken noted. Then the other team takes a turn.

The game finishes when each player on a team has successfully explained four items. The times taken for each team are added up and the team that took the shortest time is the winner.






**Activity: Taboo Game**  
**CEFR Level: Adaptable**

If learners do say one of the taboo words a thirty second penalty is added to their time.

**Variations**




Instead of timing how long it takes to explain four items, each learner can be given a time limit of 90 seconds in which to explain as many words as possible. This version is more pressurised and is better suited to stronger classes.

If learners use their mother tongue a time penalty can also be added.




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