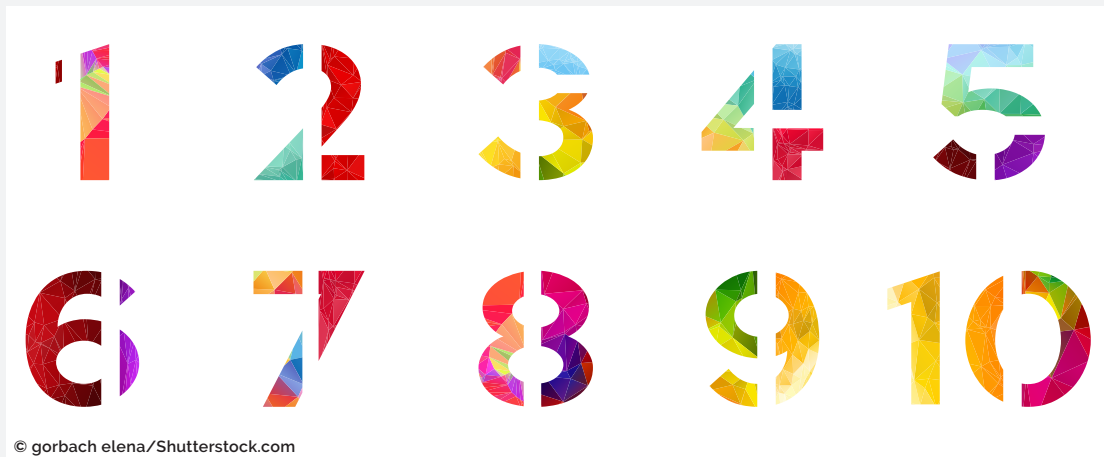


## Ten Things to Enhance Learning and Fun in the Classroom

by AARON DAVID MERMELSTEIN



“Ten Things” is a fun game that gets students thinking, talking, and working together in the English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. It is easy to prepare, and it is a fun and efficient way to enhance learning. The game can be adapted to almost any grade level or ESL/EFL classroom as long as the game categories are matched well to the learners’ language abilities. However, this game is not intended for new English-language learners unless they have a basic understanding of the vocabulary being used. In my experience, adults love playing this game as much as children do. As with any game of competition, some caution is advised for using this game with young learners or learners with low maturity levels.

Playing the game can take anywhere from about ten minutes to the entire class period;

deciding how long to play the game is up to the teacher. Materials needed for the game are a whiteboard and pens, a chalkboard and chalk, or a piece of paper big enough to be seen by all the players and pens to write on it. In addition, the teacher will need a clock or timer. Students need paper and a pencil or pen to write down their answers while in their groups.

### PREPARATION

1. Prior to the class, the teacher should have at least ten categories for the students to use during the game. In the Suggestions for Categories box, 24 categories are offered, but teachers should adjust the categories to match their students’ age and ability level. It is

best to prepare extra categories so that the game can be extended if time allows.

2. Students need to be divided into groups and sitting together in a close circle; they need to be able to speak to each other easily but not allow other groups to listen. Therefore, groups should be separated throughout the classroom as much as possible. The optimal size of each group is four to six students, but very small classes can be divided in half, if necessary. The teacher should place students into groups by numbering each student randomly so that students are forced to work with different classmates each time they are grouped. The teacher should also decide where each group will sit and direct students to the proper locations in order to cut down on the time spent getting into groups.
3. The teacher should write the group names or numbers off to one side of the board where the team scores can be written and seen, but not in a place where the scores would interfere with the game by taking up board space where students will write their answers.
4. The teacher should ensure that there are more than enough whiteboard pens, or more than enough chalk, for students to use throughout the game.

going to play a fun game called ‘Ten Things.’ Each team should take out some scratch paper or recycled paper that your team can use. You will also need something to write with. It can be a pen or a pencil, but in this game you don’t have to worry about correcting any written mistakes your team might make.” (Note: Each teacher can determine whether correct spelling is a factor in this game, but it is suggested not to require answers to be spelled correctly because students will have more fun if they don’t have to worry about spelling mistakes.)

“Each team must now select one member of the team to be your team’s *writer*. The writer will write down the team’s answers in the group and then come up and write the answers on the board.

“I will be telling you some categories, one at a time, and I will write them on the board. In your team, you will have to make sure you understand the category and think of ten things that are in that category. The writer should write down the ten things. When your team has thought of ten things, send your team’s writer to the board to write out your list. The first team to write a complete list of ten things in the category wins a point, and the team with the most points at the end of the game wins.”

The first time the class plays, it may be necessary to give an example of how to play the game. The teacher might also want to have each team select a different writer each time a new category is announced.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS

The teacher can say something like this: “Now that you’ve been divided into teams, we are

Suggestions for Categories			
<b>Things that ...</b>			
come in pairs	can fly	can live under water	have holes
move fast	are invisible	make a lot of noise	make you feel good
are difficult	can swim	people keep cold	you can’t buy
are soft	fit together	go up and down	float on the water
are hot	people grow	taste terrible	can be full or empty
move slowly	use batteries	people do in school	parents teach their kids

The teacher tells students that for each category, teams will have five minutes to think of things and write them on the board. Five minutes is a suggestion; the amount of time a teacher gives students for each category should be determined by the students' ability level; more or less time can be provided. After the given amount of time has passed, the teacher can stop play, and the team with the most things written down wins a point.

At this point, the teacher can announce the first category and begin the game.

### **ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS**

- 1.** Keep an eye on the time and always be aware of how much time is left to play the game. You don't want to end the game right in the middle of one of the categories.
- 2.** Be flexible in allowing strange or unusual answers from the students. As long as the answers fit into the category, allow the students to be as creative as possible, and everyone will have more fun.
- 3.** With lower-level students whose vocabulary may be limited, consider playing "Five Things"—that is, each group writes down five things in each category instead of ten.

### **EXTENDED PLAY**

One of the benefits of this game is that there can be extended play, as long as there is enough time and an adequate number of categories.

One method of extending the game and enhancing learning is to ask the other groups—the ones that did not get the ten answers first—if they had any different answers and then add them to the answers already on the board.

Another method of extending the game is taking moments here and there to discuss the answers provided by the students and offer

definitions or provide real examples. Even better, teachers can have the students provide definitions and examples when necessary. Basically, the idea is to create extra learning opportunities wherever or whenever possible.

### **GAME FLEXIBILITY**

Besides being played as a game, Ten Things can be used as a warm-up activity before students do other group activities. After the students have been divided into groups, the teacher can get students ready to work together in groups by asking them to play one game category prior to starting the main group activity. This works especially well when new groups are formed, as it is a fun way for students to work together for the first time.

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