

eslactive

Countdown

Tags: [advanced](#), [intermediate](#), [warmer](#)

In the Countdown ESL game, students try to make the longest word they can from nine random letters.

 2+  15-20 mins  Internet and Projector **or** Prepared Letters and Timer

Setup

If you have Internet access and a projector, the easiest way to play is to use our [online Countdown game](#). Otherwise, you will need to prepare a large number of random letters on pieces of paper, sorted into vowels and consonants, then shuffled.

Students play this game individually. Each student will need a piece of paper.

Game

1. Ask each player in turn to select a vowel or consonant until you have nine random letters. If you are using pieces of paper, stick/write them on the board.
2. The students have one minute to try and make the longest word they can, using each letter only once (make sure they understand this!). Advise them to write their ideas down.
3. When one minute is up, ask the students in turn what their longest word is. If a student repeats the word of another student, they should provide proof that they thought of it by showing it written down (you could be lenient in the first round until they get the hang of it!).
4. The students gain one point for each letter in their word- i.e. 'swim' would score four points. In the original TV program, only the student with the longest word scores points, but it works much better in class if everyone scores for their word.
5. Repeat the process for future rounds, starting letter selection with a different student each time. The student with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Target Language

The Countdown ESL Game works really well as a warmer for a class with frequent latecomers, because students can join the game as they arrive without disrupting the game. It can be played with both intermediate and advanced students, though low intermediates may find it a little difficult. If you are playing with paper letters, you could make it easier by only using common letters.