

eslactive

Hangman

Tags: [advanced](#), [beginner](#), [idioms](#), [intermediate](#), [kids](#), [vocabulary](#), [warmer](#)

The Hangman ESL game is always an easy option for a warmer, but it's also a great way to familiarise students with new vocabulary or idioms.

 4+  10-20 mins  Board and Chalk/Markers (Optional)

Setup

Almost everyone will have played this game, which dates back over a hundred years- so it probably won't need much explanation! You can play it with just one student, ask the students to play in pairs, or play as a whole class on the board. If you are playing as a small class (up to about ten people), students could also play in two teams, instead of individually.

Game

1. One student chooses a word/phrase, without telling anyone else.
2. They write dashes on a piece of paper (or the board if playing as a class) to represent the letters in that word or phrase. Forward slashes indicate spaces if necessary. For example, 'swimming pool' would become: _ _ _ _ _ / _ _ _ _ .
3. The students then take turns at guessing letters that they think appear in that word. When playing with two teams, the teams take turns (with the team of the student at the board going second).
4. If the letter appears in the word, the student at the board writes all occurrences in the appropriate position(s). If not, the student adds part of the body in the hangman drawing (e.g. a head, an arm), and writes the letter chosen underneath so it is not chosen again.
5. When a student/team thinks they know the word(s) on the board, they can guess it instead of guessing a letter. If a student is correct then it is their turn to come to

the board and with a word. Or, if playing in teams, the team wins that round and gains a point.

6. However, if the guess is not correct then another part of the body is drawn on the board. If the body is completed before a correct guess is made, the student at the board wins (and wins a point for their team if applicable).
7. Repeat for as long as desired, with other students choosing a word/phrase. If playing in teams, the team with the most points at the end wins.

If you consider the hangman drawing to be politically incorrect, or unsuitable for young or sensitive students, you could gradually draw the features on a face or a person/monster going down stairs as an alternative.

Target Language

The Hangman ESL game is great as a warmer and for familiarising students with vocabulary they have learned recently. In fact, make sure they don't know the words too well or the game can become too easy! By specifying what type of vocabulary to use you can adapt this to beginner, intermediate or advanced students. Why not try using full sentences to make it more challenging?

It's also a great way to review [idioms](#) with high intermediate and advanced levels. Seeing them written down in this way will really help students remember them, and you can check that they understand the meaning after each round.

For something similar (but a little more exciting), try [Wheel Of Fortune](#), which is based on the Hangman ESL game.