




eslactive

Twenty-One

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

The Twenty-One ESL game is a version of a popular party game in which counting gets harder and harder as numbers are replaced by other words/sounds/gestures.

 4+  5-10 mins  None

Setup

If you have ten or more students, divide the class into groups of about five or six. The students in each group (or the whole class) sit or stand in a circle.

You may want to prepare a set of challenges that students have to complete when they make a mistake. Or, if you have an Internet connection and projector, try using our fun [ESL Challenge Generator](#).

Game

1. The students take turns saying numbers in order, clockwise around the circle. I.e. the first student says "one", the person to their left "two", the person to their left "three" etc. Complete this up to the number twenty-one, then stop the students.
2. The students do this repeatedly, but each time twenty-one is reached, the person who said that number makes a new rule. This rule should involve the replacement of a number with another word/sound/gesture (e.g. instead of saying "two" a student has to say "bananas"/cheer/jump), or swapping of numbers (e.g. two and fifteen switch places). These rules carry over to all future rounds.
3. If a student makes a mistake (i.e. not following a rule or saying the wrong number), they have to restart the count from one. Optionally, you can also require them to answer a question or complete a challenge, which works well for a warmer or time-filler.

Target Language

As noted above, the Twenty-One ESL game is often used as a quick warmer or time-filler. You can adapt that to any level by choosing appropriate questions/challenges. You can also use it without the challenges to practise [numbers](#) with beginners.

For another game to practise numbers and counting, try [Catch and Count](#).