



VOCABULARY TABOO

Describe it. Don't say it. Learn it.



THE IDEA

A fun, fast-paced game that gets students using and explaining new vocabulary.

Students describe a word without saying it (or using taboo words) while their teammates guess.



IN THE CLASSROOM

Choose words from your current topic.

Give each student or team a card.

Set a timer (e.g. 60 seconds).

Students describe, their team guesses.

Rotate roles and keep score.

Great for review, starter or end-of-lesson energy boost.

HOW TO PLAY

1



PREPARE

- Choose 10–15 target vocabulary words.
- Write each word on a card.
- Add 3–5 taboo words for each card (words students cannot use).

2



DESCRIBE

- Student picks a card and describes the word.
- They cannot use the word or any taboo words.
- They can use examples, gestures, definitions or synonyms.

3



GUESS

- Teammates listen and guess the word.
- One point for a correct guess.
- Pass if needed, but try to keep going!

4



ROTATE

- Next student takes a turn.
- Keep score and celebrate good descriptions!
- Review any tricky words at the end.



WHY IT WORKS

It builds vocabulary, encourages deeper explanation, improves listening and gets every student actively using language.



EAL UPGRADE

Pre-teach or activate key vocabulary before playing.
Provide sentence frames (e.g. "It is a kind of...", "You use it when...").
Allow pair/buddy support for lower proficiency learners.



TRY IT TOMORROW

Use 10 new words from your lesson.
Play in teams of 3–4.
Set a 60-second timer per turn. Keep score. Review the words together.



TEACHER LANGUAGE

"You can't say the word or any taboo words."
"Use clues, examples or actions to help your team guess."
"What's another way to say it?"
"Great explanation! What helped your team guess?"

**DUNCAN
ROSE**

EAL • LANGUAGE • LEARNING