

15 ESL Games for Teens That Don't Feel Like a Kids' Class

Fifteen games built around what actually gets a teenage class to participate: a real position to defend, a visible scoreboard, a status to win or lose in front of the room. No materials, no younger-classroom framing.

1. Take a Side, No Fence-Sitting

B1–B2 · 5 min. A mildly controversial, genuinely two-sided prompt drops (school uniforms, group project grading, phone-free lunch). Everyone takes a side.

2. Steal the Argument

B2–C1 · 6–7 min. One student argues a position. Any classmate who thinks they can argue it better raises a hand and takes over mid-speech.

3. Devil's Advocate Swap

B2–C1 · 5–6 min. A student defends a position they don't actually hold. Midway through, the teacher swaps them to the opposite side.

4. The Unpopular Opinion

A2–B1 · 4–5 min. Each student states a deliberately mundane but debatable stance ("Group chats should have a size limit," "Pineapple belongs on pizza").

5. 60-Second Defense

A2–B2 · 3–4 min. An oddly specific, mildly awkward scenario is assigned cold ("explain why you're 20 minutes late," "explain why you're late to class").

6. Cross-Examination

B1–C1 · 3–4 min. After any short presentation or pitch, the rest of the class gets 90 seconds to fire follow-up questions the speaker defends.

7. Freeze and Justify

A2–B1 · 4–5 min. A short improvised scene is frozen at a random moment. The "frozen" student has to justify, in full sentences, exactly what they're doing.

8. The Pitch

B1–B2 · 4–5 min. A student sells a genuinely bad or absurd product or idea to the class in under a minute, treating it completely seriously.

9. Team Debate, Scored Live

B1–C1 · 10–12 min. Two teams argue opposite sides of a topic. The class updates a visible running score after each turn, so status is clear.

10. Courtroom

B2–C1 · 12–15 min. A genuinely trivial dispute ("is a hot dog a sandwich," "should the last slice go to whoever asks first") gets a full mock trial.

11. Majority Rules

B1–B2 · 8–10 min. After a team debate, the rest of the class votes on a winner. The losing team then has to argue the winning position.

12. The Comeback Round

B2–C1 · 6–8 min. A team that is clearly behind on points gets one "comeback" turn worth double, if they can land it. Mirrors the stakes of a game.

13. Roast the Rule (Gently)

B2–C1 · 4–5 min. A mundane classroom object or rule gets a lightly sarcastic, rule-bound complaint from a student, using target expressions.

14. Say It Like You Mean It

A2–B1 · 3–4 min. A flat, boring sentence gets delivered in an assigned tone (dramatic, terrified, bored, thrilled) and the class guesses the tone.

15. Guess the Reaction

A2+—B2 · 4–5 min. A surprising statement is read aloud and students race to produce the most convincing reaction — shock, disbelief,