Hangman Vault

Crack the code, one letter at a time

Ages 8–16 · ESL & spelling



Teacher Guide – setup, Zoom lessons, licensing and all 420 words. Live online play includes a 1-year license for the teacher (students join free). Offline modes work forever.

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Welcome to Hangman Vault



Hangman Vault is a modern, grown-up version of the classic word guessing game for students aged about 8 to 16. There is no hanging figure and nothing violent. Instead, the secret word is locked in a vault with a ring of indicator lights. Every wrong guess switches off one light. Find the word before the last light goes out and the door swings open: **Access granted**. If the last light goes out, the vault locks and the answer is shown, so every word is still a learning moment.

It works on a computer, tablet or phone, in the classroom or live over Zoom, Google Meet and other video calls. Students practice spelling, vocabulary, definitions, idioms, phrasal verbs and – if you turn it on – speaking.

Live online play includes a 1-year license for the teacher (students join free). Offline modes work forever.

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Learning goals

- For ages 8–16: upper elementary, middle school and high school, ESL/EFL and native speakers.
- 420 words and phrases in 15 categories, each with a short hint, a definition, an example sentence and spoken audio.
- Idioms and phrasal verbs as full phrases – spaces are shown, students find the letters.
- Listening (hint, definition, example), speaking (words with a letter, sentences with the word), spelling and strategy.

Quick start

1. Unzip the download. Open the folder and double-click **index.html**. It opens in Chrome, Edge, Safari or Firefox. Nothing to install.
2. On a tablet or phone you can also open the web link from the shop.
3. Choose one of the three ways to play.

Solo

One player. Score, streaks and an optional timer. Turn on the **computer rival** (Easy or Normal) to take turns against it. Works offline.

Team Game

2, 3 or 4 teams take turns on one screen – a classroom board, or your shared screen on Zoom. Works offline.

Play Online

You create a room. Up to 30 students join on their own devices with a 4-letter room code. Everyone sees the same board live.

The play screen

- **Left:** the vault and its ring of lights. The counter shows how many lights are left. Lights turn amber when only a third are left.
- **Right:** the blanks for the secret word, the clue panel (**Hint** and **Definition**, each with a speaker button), wrong letters, and the A–Z keyboard. A computer keyboard works too.
- **Guess the word** – type the whole word or phrase. A wrong guess switches off a light. **Clue** shows the hint and definition at once. **Pass** gives the turn away.
- **Teacher buttons:** Reveal, Skip word, Next team, End game.

Home screen buttons

My Words your own lists · **How to play** · **Printables** this guide and the word lists · **Sound** all on → no voice → off · **Full screen**. The yellow **Teacher Guide** button at the top right opens this guide.

How to play

1. Look at the blanks. Each blank is one letter. Spaces, hyphens and apostrophes are shown already (for example break the ice, pull someone's leg).
2. Choose a letter. If it is in the word, it appears in every place and the dial turns. If not, one light goes out.
3. Keep going until the word is complete, or guess the whole word.
4. Word found: the dial spins, the door swings open and the screen shows the definition and an example sentence.
5. Last light gone: the vault locks. The answer, definition and example are shown and read aloud, and you go on to the next word.

Points

What happened	Points
A letter that is in the word	1 for each time it appears (e.g. “s” in sustainable = 2)
Cracking the word (last letter or a correct whole-word guess)	+3 bonus (a whole-word guess also scores every hidden letter)
Using the word in a sentence (speaking on)	+2

Options

Option	Choices	Notes
Level	Easy · Medium · Hard · All	Easy: everyday words. Medium: school words. Hard: advanced and academic words.
Vault lights	10 · 8 · 6	Fewer lights = harder. 8 is the classic game.
Clues	Hint + definition · Hint first · No clues	Hint first: the definition unlocks after 2 misses. No clues: the hint unlocks after 3 misses, the definition after 4. The Clue button shows both at once.
Words in a game	5 · 10 · 15 · 20 · All	10 words is about 10–15 minutes.
Speaking	Off · Say a word with the letter · Use the word in a sentence · Both	See page 5.
Timer	Off · 15 s · 30 s · 60 s	Solo: time out = one light goes out. Teams and online: time out = a missed try.
Teams	Team Game: 2–4 with your own names. Online: 1 (whole class) to 4.	Online with 1 team, students take turns as one class team.
Computer rival	Off · Easy · Normal (Solo only)	It never peeks: it only guesses from the letters it can see.

Clues, audio, speaking and the timer

Clues and audio

- Every word in the categories has a **hint** (a quick clue), a **definition** (a dictionary-style meaning) and an **example sentence**.
- Hints and definitions never contain the answer. The example sentence appears after the word is cracked or revealed, because it uses the word.
- Press the speaker buttons to hear the hint, the definition, the example and the word in clear American English. Each letter name is spoken when it is chosen.
- My Words lists use the hint you type and the voice built into your device.

Speaking and the 3-try rule

Say a word with the letter

Before a letter counts, the player says a word that starts with it: "**B** – brave!". Then the teacher (or the other team) taps **Good!**. Challenge: the word must fit the category.

Use the word in a sentence

When the word is cracked, the player says a full sentence with it for **+2 points**. Great for meaning, grammar and pronunciation.

Try	What happens
1st missed try (teacher taps Try again, or the timer runs out)	Try again! – the same player tries again.
2nd missed try	Final warning!
3rd missed try	No speaking, no guess! – the letter does not count and the turn passes.
Pass	The turn passes at once (no letter).

The timer

- **Solo:** the player has 15, 30 or 60 seconds for each guess. When the time runs out, one light goes out and the clock restarts.
- **Team games and online:** when the time runs out it counts as a missed try (see the table above).
- Online, students speak on the Zoom / Meet call. Nothing is recorded – you listen and tap.

Solo, the computer rival and Team games

Solo

- Great for homework, self-study, early finishers and one-to-one lessons.
- The top bar shows the **score**, the current **streak** (words cracked in a row) and the **best streak** ever on that device.
- Turn on the timer for a challenge. The end screen shows points, vaults cracked and the best streak.

Computer rival

- **Easy** often guesses common letters. **Normal** thinks about words from the list that fit the blanks, and may guess the whole word.
- You and the computer take turns, with scores. It never sees the answer.

Team Game (one screen)

- Choose 2, 3 or 4 teams and type team names. The highlighted score at the top shows whose turn it is.
- Show the game on the classroom board or TV. Teams send one student at a time, or call out letters while you tap.
- Use **Next team** if a team is not ready, and **Skip word** for a word that is too hard.
- You can also share this screen on Zoom and tap letters for students – no license is needed for that.

Big class idea: 4 teams, 8 lights, Hint first, Speaking “Both”, 30-second timer. Every correct letter needs a word, and the team that cracks the vault uses the word in a sentence.

Playing on Zoom – step by step

Before the lesson (teacher)

1. Open Hangman Vault → **Play Online** → **Create a room**.
2. The first time, type your **teacher license code** (HVT-XXXX-XXXX-XXXX) and press Create. The app remembers it on this device.
3. Choose the words, level and options, then press **Create the room**. You get a 4-letter room code, for example **KTVR**.

Students join (free)

1. Each student opens Hangman Vault on their own phone, tablet or computer (the web link from the shop, or their own copy).
2. **Play Online** → **Join a room** → type the room code and their name → **Join**.
3. Tip: paste the web link with **`?join=KTVR`** on the end into the Zoom chat – the code is filled in for them.
4. They appear in your lobby, shared between the teams. Students can tap **Join this team**; you can move them or remove them.

Start

1. Press **Start the game**. Every screen shows the same vault and board.
2. The student whose turn it is sees **Your turn!**. Only that student's keyboard works. The others watch and help their team on the call.
3. Turns go Red Team → Blue Team → … and each team's students take turns in order.

What to share on Zoom: your teacher screen is safe to share – the secret word stays hidden until you press **Show the word**. Or open **Big screen** in a second browser tab (Play Online → Big screen, type the code) and share that tab: it shows the board without any buttons.

Zoom – during the game

Button (teacher)	What it does
Show the word	Shows you the secret word. Press again to hide it before sharing your screen.
Good! · Try again · Pass	Appear when a student must speak. You hear them on the call and tap.
Letters / Guess the word	You can always tap for the team whose turn it is – useful if a student's internet drops.
Clue	Shows the hint and the definition to everyone.
Reveal · Skip word	Show the answer, or move on to a new word without points.
Next team	Pass the turn to the next team.
Players	Move students between teams, give a student the turn, or remove a student.
Next word · End game	After each word. At the end: Play again, or New words (back to the lobby with the same students).

Good to know

- If a student refreshes or loses the internet, the game reconnects by itself. The home screen also has a **Rejoin** button.
- If a student is offline on their turn, the turn goes to the next student in the team. If nobody in a team is online, you can tap for them.
- Up to 30 students in a room. Rooms close by themselves after 2 hours with no moves.
- The game has no chat and collects no personal data. Students only type a first name or a nickname.
- The secret word never goes to student devices until it is cracked or revealed.
- Sound: each device plays its own sounds. If you share your screen with computer audio, turn off Sound on one side.

Your teacher license

Live online play includes a 1-year license for the teacher (students join free). Offline modes work forever.

- Your code looks like **`HVT-XXXX-XXXX-XXXX`**. It comes with your order (by message or email from the shop).
- The 365 days start the first time you use the code – not the day you buy it.
- Use it on up to **3 of your own devices** (for example your laptop, tablet and phone).
- Only the teacher who creates a room needs a code. Students joining a room never need one.
- Solo and Team games never need a code and never stop working.
- After you type the code once, the app shows **"License active until ..."** on that device.

Messages you might see

Message	What to do
That license code was not found	Check the letters. The code has no letter O or number 0.
This license ended on ...	Get a new 1-year license from the shop (link in the message).
Already used on 3 devices	Message the seller – they can reset your devices.
Too many tries	Wait 10 minutes and try again.
Could not reach the game server	Check the internet connection, then try again.

Please keep your code private: it is for one teacher.

My Words – make your own lists

1. On the home screen, press **My Words** (or **Type your own words** when you choose the words).
2. Type a list name, for example Unit 6 – The Water Cycle.
3. Type or paste one word or phrase per line. Add a hint after **=** if you like.
4. Press **Save list**, then **Play this list**.

```
condensation = Water vapor turning back into liquid.
precipitation = Rain, snow, sleet or hail.
water cycle
run out of = Have none left.
Mississippi = The longest river system in North America.
```

- Letters A–Z, spaces, hyphens (-) and apostrophes (') only. 2 to 24 characters per line, up to 100 words, up to 30 lists.
- Capital letters are kept, so names work (Mississippi, Tuesday). Guessing is not case-sensitive.
- Lines that can't be used are listed in red, so you can fix them. Repeated words are saved once.
- Lists are saved in this browser on this device. They work in Solo, Team and Online games – online, the words go to your room, so students don't need the list.
- My Words show your hint (no definition or example), read aloud by your device's voice.

List ideas

- This week's spelling or vocabulary list · key words from a novel or a science unit · exam word lists · class names · countries and capitals · phrasal verbs from the textbook · words students got wrong last week.

Lesson ideas for older students

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Three Medium words from today's topic, Hint first, Team Game. Students predict the topic from the first answer.

Definition duel

Clues: No clues. Before guessing letters, each team may ask for the Clue once. Fewer clues = bragging rights.

Idiom detective

Category Idioms. After each phrase, teams invent a situation where they would use it. Best situation wins +2 (use Speaking "Use the word in a sentence").

Phrasal verb swap

After each phrasal verb, students give a one-word synonym (find out → discover).

Exam prep

Academic Words, Hard, 6 lights, 30-second timer. Students write each word and its definition in a notebook as it is cracked.

Streak challenge (homework)

Solo, Mixed, All levels. Students screenshot their best streak. Weekly class leaderboard.

Mystery Friday

Crime & Mystery category on the big screen. After the game, groups write a 5-sentence mystery using five of the words.

Student-made vaults

Pairs write five words with hints in My Words for another pair to crack. Great for revising any subject.

Strategy tips to teach

- Start with common letters: E, A, T, O, I, N, S, R.
- Look at the shape: two short words with a space may be a phrasal verb.
- Use word endings: -tion, -ment, -ing, -able, -ous.
- Only guess the whole word when you are sure – a wrong guess costs a light.

Questions and answers

Do I need the internet? Only for Play Online. Solo and Team games work from the unzipped folder with no internet.

Online play says it is not switched on. Make sure you are using the latest download from the shop, and that every device is online.

No sound? Check the Sound button on the home screen and the device volume. Some browsers start sound only after the first tap.

The letters look different on my phone. The game uses the fonts in the folder; on a few older devices the system font is used instead. It still works.

My Words disappeared. Lists are saved in one browser on one device. Clearing the browser's data removes them. Keep a copy of your list in a document.

A student sees "Wait for your turn". Only the student whose turn it is can tap letters. Use Players → Their turn to give someone the turn.

Can students see the answer? No. The word stays on the game server and on your screen only (hidden until you press Show the word).

Is it right for my age group? Ages 8–10: Easy level, 10 lights, Hint + definition, timer off. Ages 11–13: Medium, 8 lights, Hint first. Ages 14–16 and exam classes: Hard or Academic Words, 6 lights, No clues, 30-second timer.

How many students? Up to 30 in one online room, plus big screens.

Is anything recorded? No. Speaking is heard on your call; the teacher taps Good!.

Is it violent? No. There is no hanging figure – just a vault, lights and a dial.

All 420 words

Each word has a hint, a definition, an example sentence and spoken audio in the app. The hints and definitions are in the printable Word Lists. E Easy · M Medium · H Hard.

Science (28)

atom	E
cell	E
magnet	E
fossil	E
planet	E
oxygen	E
liquid	E
solid	E
germ	E
gravity	M
experiment	M
microscope	M
molecule	M
electricity	M
friction	M
hypothesis	M
laboratory	M
skeleton	M
temperature	M
evaporation	H
photosynthesis	H
chromosome	H
ecosystem	H
velocity	H
organism	H
chemical reaction	H
nucleus	H
circuit	H

Geography & Countries (28)

map	E
river	E
island	E
desert	E
ocean	E
Canada	E
Japan	E
Mexico	E
coast	E
mountain	M
volcano	M
continent	M
Brazil	M
Egypt	M
Thailand	M
Australia	M
capital	M
population	M
equator	H
latitude	H
longitude	H
peninsula	H
Switzerland	H
Argentina	H
hemisphere	H
archipelago	H
glacier	H
tropical	H

Technology (28)

app	E
email	E
robot	E
screen	E
mouse	E
online	E
laptop	E
video	E
battery	E
password	M
keyboard	M
internet	M
download	M
website	M
charger	M
printer	M
software	M
hardware	M
algorithm	H
programmer	H
artificial intelligence	H
cybersecurity	H
bandwidth	H
encryption	H
spreadsheet	H
virtual reality	H
database	H
notification	H

Sports (28)

goal	E
team	E
coach	E
race	E
swim	E
medal	E
tennis	E
soccer	E
score	E
referee	M
stadium	M
basketball	M
volleyball	M
champion	M
athlete	M
tournament	M
skateboard	M
gymnastics	M
marathon	H
equipment	H
competition	H
opponent	H
spectator	H
sportsmanship	H
badminton	H
penalty	H
endurance	H
water polo	H

Food & Cooking (28)

bake	E
fry	E
boil	E
spicy	E
salad	E
recipe	E
dessert	E
snack	E
oven	E
ingredient	M
vegetarian	M
breakfast	M
delicious	M
chopsticks	M
barbecue	M
noodles	M
sandwich	M
microwave	M
nutrition	H

restaurant	H
cinnamon	H
avocado	H
appetizer	H
cuisine	H
leftovers	H
utensils	H
vinegar	H
calories	H

Jobs & Careers (28)

chef	E
nurse	E
pilot	E
farmer	E
dentist	E
artist	E
police officer	E
baker	E
waiter	E
engineer	M
journalist	M
mechanic	M
lawyer	M
scientist	M
firefighter	M
architect	M
librarian	M
plumber	M
veterinarian	H
accountant	H
electrician	H
pharmacist	H
photographer	H
interpreter	H
receptionist	H
entrepreneur	H
psychologist	H
salary	H

Feelings & Personality (28)

happy	E
angry	E
tired	E
proud	E
shy	E
brave	E
lonely	E
kind	E
funny	E
nervous	M
excited	M
jealous	M
curious	M
generous	M
honest	M
patient	M
confident	M
embarrassed	M
frustrated	H
grateful	H
anxious	H
optimistic	H
responsible	H
determined	H
sympathetic	H
stubborn	H
independent	H
enthusiastic	H

Travel (28)

trip	E
hotel	E
tour	E
ticket	E
beach	E
bag	E
taxi	E
camera	E
visit	E
passport	M
suitcase	M
airport	M
vacation	M
tourist	M
souvenir	M
luggage	M
journey	M
backpack	M
reservation	H
itinerary	H
destination	H
departure	H
currency	H
customs	H
accommodation	H
boarding pass	H
jet lag	H
sightseeing	H

Environment (28)

tree	E
earth	E
trash	E
plastic	E
reuse	E
solar	E
nature	E
flood	E
wind	E
recycle	M
pollution	M
energy	M
wildlife	M
drought	M
compost	M
rainforest	M
endangered	M
habitat	M
climate change	H
greenhouse gas	H
renewable	H
deforestation	H
biodiversity	H
conservation	H
sustainable	H
emissions	H
atmosphere	H
carbon footprint	H

Music & Movies (28)

song	E
band	E
drum	E
guitar	E
movie	E
actor	E
piano	E
dance	E
music	E
concert	M
singer	M
cartoon	M
director	M
audience	M
trailer	M
comedy	M
violin	M
lyrics	M
orchestra	H
soundtrack	H
documentary	H
microphone	H
animation	H
rehearsal	H
headphones	H
subtitles	H
rhythm	H
saxophone	H

Idioms (28)

piece of cake	E

on cloud nine	E
hit the books	E
break a leg	E
cold feet	E
all ears	E
hit the road	E
in hot water	E
break the ice	M
under the weather	M
once in a blue moon	M
cost an arm and a leg	M
go the extra mile	M
spill the beans	M
time flies	M
call it a day	M
on the same page	M
see eye to eye	M
in the same boat	H
bite the bullet	H
beat around the bush	H
hit the nail on the head	H
pull someone's leg	H
a blessing in disguise	H
get out of hand	H
the last straw	H
up in the air	H
keep an eye on	H

Phrasal Verbs (28)

wake up	E
get up	E
sit down	E
look for	E
turn on	E
turn off	E
give up	E
put on	E
come back	E
find out	M
look after	M
run out of	M
get along	M
pick up	M
grow up	M
check in	M
show up	M
figure out	M
look forward to	H
put off	H
come up with	H
break down	H
carry on	H
take after	H
turn down	H
get over	H
fill in	H
point out	H

Academic Words (28)

fact	E
idea	E
answer	E
explain	E
example	E
compare	E
result	E
topic	E
reason	E
analyze	M
argument	M
summary	M
conclusion	M
describe	M
research	M
paragraph	M
predict	M
opinion	M
theory	H
interpret	H
significant	H
consequence	H
perspective	H
vocabulary	H
definition	H
estimate	H
bibliography	H
alternative	H

Health & Body (28)

heart	E
brain	E
lungs	E
bone	E
sleep	E
fever	E
cough	E
muscle	E
blood	E
stomach	M
exercise	M
headache	M
medicine	M
vitamin	M
allergy	M
hospital	M
ankle	M
healthy	M
digestion	H
immune system	H
vaccination	H
symptom	H
posture	H
injury	H
prescription	H
kidney	H
hygiene	H
dehydrated	H

Crime & Mystery (28)

clue	E
thief	E
secret	E
judge	E
steal	E
mask	E
code	E
lie	E
spy	E
detective	M
suspect	M
witness	M
mystery	M
evidence	M
burglar	M
alarm	M
disguise	M
innocent	M
fingerprint	H
investigate	H
alibi	H
interrogate	H
courtroom	H
verdict	H
motive	H
surveillance	H
confession	H
forensic	H



Code Breaker

This certificate is awarded to

_____

for cracking _____ vaults in Hangman Vault

Best streak: _____ Category: _____

Date: _____ Teacher: _____