



Twenty Questions

Work out a secret person, place or thing by asking no more than twenty yes-or-no questions.

Players 2–10 (best with 3–6)**Play time** 10–25 min**Materials** No materials**Movement** Seated

QUICK RULES

1. One player thinks of something and says only whether it is a person, place or thing.
2. The others take turns asking yes-or-no questions — twenty in total.
3. Anyone may use their turn to make a guess instead.
4. Guess it within twenty and the guessers win; otherwise the answerer does.

SET UP

1. Choose the first answerer. They think of something everyone at the table could reasonably know.
2. The answerer announces the category — person, place or thing. For mixed ages, also allow "animal" and "food".
3. Pick someone to count questions aloud. Counting on fingers in view of everyone works well.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Going clockwise, each guesser asks one question that can be answered "yes" or "no".
2. The answerer replies truthfully with yes, no, or — at most three times per round — 'sometimes'.
3. Every question counts towards the twenty, including a direct guess such as "Is it a lighthouse?".
4. If a question cannot fairly be answered yes or no, the answerer says 'rephrase' and it does not count.
5. A correct guess ends the round immediately. That guesser becomes the next answerer.
6. If twenty questions pass with no correct guess, the answerer reveals the secret and chooses the next answerer.

HOW THE GAME ENDS

A round ends on a correct guess or after the twentieth question. Play one round per player so everyone is the answerer once, then stop — or keep a tally of rounds won by guessers and by answerers and call it after an agreed number.

PLAYING SEATED

Played seated by default. No step requires standing or moving.

TIPS FOR THE HOST

- Teach the "halving" habit with the first few questions — bigger than a chair? indoors? — before anyone guesses specifics.
- If the secret turns out to be too obscure, let the answerer give one free hint at question ten.
- With very different ages at the table, pair a younger player with an adult as a single guesser.
- Private jokes and people only half the table know are unfair secrets. Ask answerers to choose common ground.

VARIATIONS

Narrow theme. Every secret must fit a theme chosen for the evening — things in a kitchen, places within an hour of here, things you would pack for a holiday. Themes make the game quicker and are kinder to first-time players.

Reverse twenty questions. One player leaves earshot while the group agrees on a secret. On returning, that player asks the questions and the group answers in turn. It suits groups in which nobody wants to be the lone answerer.

STARTER IDEAS: THINGS

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| ■ a lighthouse | ■ a hot-air balloon |
| ■ an umbrella | ■ a postage stamp |
| ■ a bicycle bell | ■ a rocking chair |
| ■ a teapot | ■ a compass |

STARTER IDEAS: PLACES

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| ■ a library | ■ a desert island |
| ■ a railway station | ■ a football stadium |
| ■ a bakery | ■ the top of a mountain |

Times are editorial estimates, not test results. Editorially checked for clarity and consistency. We do not claim group playtesting for this page.