Category Naming Game for Adult Groups

Choose a category, take turns naming a fitting example, and keep the round friendly with a clear pass option and no forced elimination.

Host guide / A4 / 3–12 adults; larger groups can play in small circles / 10–20 minutes; choose 5–10 prompts

Read the guide privately first if this activity has hidden answers. Print single-sided at Actual size / 100%. Cut only sheets marked CARDS. Keep answer keys with the host.

What you need

- No materials needed for the spoken version.

- Optional prompt cards, paper for a silent round, and a timer.

- Optional letter cards or a random letter picker chosen by the host.

How to run it

1. Choose a card and read the category aloud. Before the first answer, agree whether the group is using the open-list mode or the optional letter variation.

2. Pick a speaking order by seating position or let volunteers start. Each person offers one different example that fits. Allow a short pause; do not use a buzzer or demand an instant answer.

3. If someone repeats an answer or passes, thank them and continue to the next person. The default game has no elimination and no penalty.

4. Continue around the circle until the group has named several examples or the topic naturally runs out. A 60–90 second round is usually enough; the host may stop sooner.

5. For an optional letter round, choose a letter before revealing the category. Accept any reasonable category answer beginning with that letter. If the combination feels too narrow, draw another letter or drop the constraint.

6. After a few prompts, invite the group to suggest a category or finish. Do not score personal knowledge or turn the answers into a workplace assessment.

Pick a mode that suits the group

The open-list mode is the easiest version: take turns naming any reasonable example in the category. It works well when the group is new to the game or wants a low-pressure warm-up. The host can show one sample answer, then start the circle; examples are not an exhaustive key.

The optional letter mode adds a constraint. Select a letter first, then give the category. Players name an answer that begins with that letter. Some pairings will be easy and others awkward, so allow a redraw or return to open-list play whenever the group gets stuck. The letter is a playful prompt, not a vocabulary test.

Keep turns easy to join

Say the category once and leave a little thinking time before the first person speaks. A participant can say “pass,” answer in chat, or observe. Do not call on a quiet person without consent. For a large group, use small circles of four to six; one room-wide turn can take too long and make passing feel conspicuous.

If a proposed answer seems debatable, ask the group whether it fits the spirit of the prompt. Accept a reasonable interpretation and keep going. The host’s job is to keep the round moving, not adjudicate obscure edge cases.

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Printable host sheet

Welcome: “We will take turns naming examples for one category. You can answer, pass, or observe. Repeats are fine to notice, but nobody is out. We will stop when the list slows or the group is ready.”

Round: read one prompt; allow a pause; take one answer per person; repeat once if energy remains. Optional twist: choose a starting letter before revealing the prompt. Close: invite one new category or move to the next activity.

Use the 40 prompts

The prompt set mixes everyday objects, public spaces, travel, food, tools, and observations. Some invite a narrow list; others can support many answers. Choose cards that suit the occasion and skip any that feel unfamiliar. You can also print the list and let participants draw a card rather than asking the host to select.

For a quiet group, let everyone write one answer first, then share only volunteers. For a remote group, post the prompt in chat and allow spoken or typed answers. Do not require cameras or use a fast-response timer.

Finish without ranking people

If the group enjoys a challenge, it can count how many unique examples it named as a whole. Avoid keeping individual scores or comparing who answered fastest. A round can end with a tie, an unfinished list, or a simple switch to the next topic.

A category game is a short shared activity, not a measure of creativity, memory, vocabulary, or job competence. Keep the score, if any, attached to the group’s list rather than to a person.

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CARDS / Category Naming Game for Adult Groups

N_CATEGORY_GAME-001 / Category prompt

Name a breakfast food that is usually served warm.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-002 / Category prompt

Name an object you might pack for a one-day conference that is not a laptop.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-003 / Category prompt

Name something that makes a waiting area easier to use.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-004 / Category prompt

Name a sound you can recognize without seeing its source.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-005 / Category prompt

Name an item people often keep in a desk drawer.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-006 / Category prompt

Name a way to reuse a paper clip without clipping paper.

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CARDS / Category Naming Game for Adult Groups

N_CATEGORY_GAME-007 / Category prompt

Name something sold in a museum shop besides a mug.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-008 / Category prompt

Name an object with wheels that is not a car.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-009 / Category prompt

Name something people fold before putting it away.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-010 / Category prompt

Name something you might find in a public library besides books.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-011 / Category prompt

Name a food that is often eaten with a spoon but can be eaten another way.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-012 / Category prompt

Name a place where people wait without forming a line.

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CARDS / Category Naming Game for Adult Groups

N_CATEGORY_GAME-013 / Category prompt Name something you might borrow from a neighbor.	N_CATEGORY_GAME-014 / Category prompt Name an object with a handle that is not a door.
N_CATEGORY_GAME-015 / Category prompt Name something that helps a traveler identify a bag.	N_CATEGORY_GAME-016 / Category prompt Name a job where a uniform is common.
N_CATEGORY_GAME-017 / Category prompt Name an item that can be carried in one hand and used outdoors.	N_CATEGORY_GAME-018 / Category prompt Name something you can hear in a train station.

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CARDS / Category Naming Game for Adult Groups

N_CATEGORY_GAME-019 / Category prompt

Name a useful object that fits inside a coat pocket.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-020 / Category prompt

Name something that makes a room easier to navigate.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-021 / Category prompt

Name a kind of weather that can change a picnic plan.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-022 / Category prompt

Name an object that can be used as a bookmark.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-023 / Category prompt

Name something you might see on a restaurant menu but not eat.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-024 / Category prompt

Name a place where you could find a map.

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CARDS / Category Naming Game for Adult Groups

N_CATEGORY_GAME-025 / Category prompt Name an object that keeps a door open.	N_CATEGORY_GAME-026 / Category prompt Name an everyday item made from more than one material.
N_CATEGORY_GAME-027 / Category prompt Name something that can be repaired instead of replaced.	N_CATEGORY_GAME-028 / Category prompt Name a food that is often packed for a long journey.
N_CATEGORY_GAME-029 / Category prompt Name an object you can use to leave a temporary note.	N_CATEGORY_GAME-030 / Category prompt Name a public place where people sometimes whisper.

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CARDS / Category Naming Game for Adult Groups

N_CATEGORY_GAME-031 / Category prompt

Name a type of container that is not a box.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-032 / Category prompt

Name something that can make a meeting room easier to find.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-033 / Category prompt

Name an activity you can do while seated with a group.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-034 / Category prompt

Name a shape commonly found in street signs.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-035 / Category prompt

Name something you might hear in a market.

N_CATEGORY_GAME-036 / Category prompt

Name an item that can be shared without being consumed.

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CARDS / Category Naming Game for Adult Groups

N_CATEGORY_GAME-037 / Category prompt Name a tool used to measure something other than time.	N_CATEGORY_GAME-038 / Category prompt Name something that can be arranged in a stack.
N_CATEGORY_GAME-039 / Category prompt Name a way to travel that does not use an engine.	N_CATEGORY_GAME-040 / Category prompt Name an object people use to protect paper from rain.

Hosting questions

How many players can join?

Three to twelve works for a single circle. With more people, use several small circles so the turn does not become a long room-wide round.

What happens if an answer repeats?

Notice the repeat and continue. The default rules do not eliminate anyone or assign a penalty.

How does the letter variation work?

Choose a letter before revealing the category and accept reasonable answers that begin with it. Redraw or remove the letter when the combination is too narrow.

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Is there a right answer?

No. Prompts invite examples, and the group can accept reasonable interpretations rather than using a fixed answer key.

Original AI-assisted resource with AI editorial review. Independent human playtesting and physical printing have not been completed. Answer, listen, or pass.

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