Speaker’s Notes

22 | Using Competitions in ELT
Halis Bereket · BEREKET ELT Archive

1. Using Competitions in ELT

Welcome. This seminar brings together competition activities that I used over many years with different learners. The archive includes vocabulary quizzes, general knowledge, listening, video and spelling activities. Today we will examine how to organise a round, involve every learner and use answers as a starting point for further learning. The classroom illustration represents the excitement of teams working together.

2. The classroom experience

Imagine three small teams of young learners, with three children sitting together in each team. They are excited about helping their own team succeed. This is the classroom experience behind the background illustration. The arrangement is an example, rather than a rule for every class. In larger classes, create enough small teams for everyone to participate. The teacher needs to see whose voice is heard and whose ideas remain unnoticed.

3. The learning purpose

Before choosing a competition, decide what learners should practise. A vocabulary round can revisit meanings, a listening round can check comprehension, and a video round can focus on details that learners have observed. General knowledge creates opportunities to use English, but the questions should be familiar enough for the class. A correct letter on an answer sheet is useful information. Asking learners to explain their choice gives us more information about their understanding.

4. Competition formats

The supplied archive contains different formats. Show the distinction between a quiz that needs no audio, a listening task that depends on a recording, and a video task that depends on a clip. Vocabulary and general knowledge can use pictures or text. Spelling can focus on familiar words. Spoken responses can use the Yes / No Contest idea. Each format needs suitable instructions and enough preparation. Select examples for the learners in front of you rather than assuming that one format suits every group.

5. Small teams

For a group of three, suggest a reader, a recorder and a spokesperson. Explain that these are temporary responsibilities. The reader checks the question, the recorder writes the agreed answer and the spokesperson explains it when asked. Rotate the roles after a short round so that the same confident learner does not lead throughout. The teacher can invite each member to think privately before the group talks. Balance the teams without announcing labels such as strong and weak students.

6. A clear round

Explain the routine and practise it before scoring. Show one question. Give everyone a little private thinking time, then allow the teams to discuss. Ask the recorder to write the agreed answer. All groups submit at the same signal. This reduces the advantage of copying another team and gives quieter learners time to contribute. In a short written round, collecting answers before showing the key also preserves the purpose of the later feedback.

7. Fair participation

A competition can become a contest between a few quick responders unless the teacher designs participation carefully. Simultaneous answer cards or written answer sheets allow every team to respond. Avoid eliminating learners after a mistake. Learners who need more reading time can receive a longer response window or simpler wording that keeps the same learning goal. A mistake should lead to explanation and another opportunity. Watch the group conversation, and encourage members to invite a teammate who has not spoken.

8. A test without listening

Open example 10 for the short demonstration. It adapts five questions from the supplied 04_vmpetition presentation and does not require a recording. Each question has a separate answer slide, but show all questions and collect responses before revealing answers if you want a full round. The questions illustrate vocabulary and grammar rather than a test for very young beginners. For younger learners, replace the words and structures with familiar classroom language. The original archive test is retained separately.

9. Answer review

After scoring, revisit the answers. Ask a spokesperson to explain a choice, then invite another learner to give a fresh sentence or clarify a useful clue. Keep the explanation brief enough to maintain interest. If a question has more than one defensible answer, acknowledge the ambiguity and accept a justified response. Check the wording before using the same item again. The purpose of feedback is to help learners use the language more accurately in the next task.

10. Vocabulary rounds

The vocabulary archive shows a sequence of questions and answer slides. A teacher can give a meaning, a picture or a short context. After identifying the word, ask the team to use it in a sentence that shows its meaning. Choose words that learners have met or that the lesson deliberately introduces. If a clue points to several possible words, accept an appropriate alternative or refine the clue. A short round can revisit several words without turning the whole lesson into guessing.

11. General knowledge

The general knowledge archive includes short questions and answer slides. I used such activities near the end of lessons to offer a change of pace. Choose topics that do not depend heavily on one learner’s background knowledge. A team can answer a simple question and then discuss a related prompt in English. Some old

factual questions may need updating before reuse. For a language lesson, judge whether learners can understand and respond, and explain the information needed for unfamiliar topics.

12. Listening rounds

A listening competition needs the recording, working playback and questions matched to it. Explain the number of plays before the round starts and use the same conditions for all teams. One supplied presentation records my choice to play material twice so that learners understood it more fully. This is a classroom decision, not a universal rule. After teams submit answers, replay the useful section and ask which words support the choice. Open the archive recording in advance to check its volume and availability.

13. Video rounds

Video competitions require a clip that the teacher can actually show. Preview the clip and decide whether learners should see questions first. A short first viewing can establish the situation, while a second viewing can support a focused task. Keep viewing conditions consistent across teams. Ask learners to describe what they saw and heard after giving the answer. The archive video example shows the question-and-answer format, but its old media references need checking on the teaching computer.

14. Spelling and spoken responses

For a spelling activity, decide whether learners will write a word, say the letters or respond to a definition. For spoken practice, the Yes / No Contest encourages alternatives such as That is correct, I agree and I am not sure. Explain the response rule in a practice round. Keep everyone involved by giving the next team an equivalent opportunity. A learner who struggles should receive helpful feedback and another chance. Avoid making public embarrassment part of the entertainment.

15. Excel scoring

The Excel examples show how a teacher can record responses, calculate totals and display a ranking. Example 08 is the workbook associated with Mustafa Yücedal. Its labels describe fixed scoring and a variable score linked to the number of teams that answer correctly. Explain the chosen rule before the competition begins. Example 09 belongs to the original written test. Keep a paper record while entering answers, check a known result, and show learners how points were awarded.

16. Mustafa Yücedal

I encouraged Mustafa Yücedal to prepare this Excel scoring file because I believed in his ability. He was talented, although he was less certain of himself at the time. We keep his name with the example as a warm reminder of our shared work. This acknowledgement belongs beside the workbook and in the seminar materials. It also reminds us how encouragement can help colleagues contribute a skill they may hesitate to share.

17. Scoring choices

A simple fixed score is often easiest for a new class to understand. A variable rule can also work, but explain exactly how it changes the points before using it. Separate language correctness from any additional participation points, and make the criteria visible. If teams finish with the same total, sharing first place is a reasonable choice. If you use a tie-break question, announce that plan beforehand and give teams equivalent conditions. Do not change a rule after seeing who would benefit.

18. A participant task

Ask participants to work in small groups. Give them a few minutes to design a three-question round for a class they know. Their plan should identify the target language, the group arrangement and the response method. They should check the answer key and decide how to include each learner. Ask them to add one follow-up speaking or writing task. Invite two groups to demonstrate a question. The other participants can identify what is clear and what needs adjusting.

19. After the competition

The competition ends with a short learning review. Ask teams to choose a word or structure they want to remember. Record a few useful examples on the board. Invite learners to correct one error or create a new example together. Praise specific contributions such as explaining a clue, inviting a teammate or checking an answer. The teacher can use missed questions to plan a later review. Points and rankings can close the game, while the language review connects it to the next lesson.

20. Thank you

Thank participants for taking part. Invite them to adapt the examples to their own learners and to share classroom experiences through the archive. Remind them that the downloadable package includes the presentation, notes and numbered examples. The background illustration is a generated representation of enthusiastic team participation. It does not depict actual pupils.