

The Molecule Game Instructions - UACTT Conference 2021

The Molecule Game is a fun, interactive way to get your students engaged in a structured classroom discussion. You can use it to build relationships in your classroom and create a safe environment where students feel comfortable speaking, or you can use it to get students sharing about curriculum content.

How to play the game

1. Explain the instructions and answer any questions before having the students get out of their seats.
2. Read the following instructions to the students:

For the purpose of this game, you are all molecules. In a minute, after I have explained all the rules, I will have you stand up. When I call out “molecules mingle” you will move randomly around the room at a walking pace. When I call out “molecules bond” you will face the student nearest you and stand in front of them. Then you will stand quietly and listen to my question. Then you will introduce yourself to your partner and answer the question.

Try to remember your partner’s name and the information you learned about them. You will need it later. Your answers will be shared with the class, so only share information you don’t mind if everyone knows. You may only partner with each student once. You may talk to your partner about your answers until I call out “molecules freeze”. Then you must stand with your body and mouth frozen.

3. Ask students to stand and begin the game by calling out “molecules mingle”.
4. After they have walked around for a bit, call out “molecules bond”.
5. Check to make sure all students have a partner. If you have an odd number, jump in and partner with a student. Your students will love to learn random facts about you.
6. Read the students a question. Remind them they are to introduce themselves and then answer the question.
7. Call out “Molecules freeze”. Remind them they need to try to remember their partner’s name and answer. Then begin a new round.
8. After 5-6 rounds have students return to their seats.
9. Walk around the room and choose a student to highlight. Ask, “Who can tell me the name of this person? Who can tell me a fun fact about this person?” The student or students who can answer the question raise their hands and answer. Then move to the next person. Be prepared to fill in the person’s name if no one in the class can remember it or ask the student one of the questions.

Tips and Tricks

- It can be helpful to have two students model how they will pair up, what is a safe distance, and ask them a practice question. This makes students feel more comfortable.
- Define any “off-limits” areas, such as behind your desk.
- Remind students that all answers must be classroom-appropriate or PG.
- Let students partner with their friends if they want to in the first round. It will make them feel more comfortable and they will have to choose someone else in the next round.
- Jump in and help students find partners if you see students without partners.
- If you have a student who is resistant to play, encourage them to try it. If they refuse, ask them to sit on the side and watch for one round and then invite them to join the game.
- If you have a student who is misbehaving or not following the game rules give them a warning. If they persist with the unwanted behavior ask them to sit out for a round and watch. Then invite them back in.
- When designing your questions, be sensitive to the fact that not all students have the same resources. For example, it might be embarrassing for a student to reveal they have never left the state when another student has been to Paris.

Version One—Get to know your sample questions (Beginning Level):

1. What is your favorite junk food?
2. What is your favorite movie?
3. When and why did you last wear a Band-Aid?
4. Who is the most famous person you ever met?
5. What’s the longest you’ve gone without brushing your teeth?
6. What is your favorite breakfast cereal?
7. Who is your role model?
8. What is your favorite dessert?
9. If you were given a week off and \$1000 where would you go?
10. If you could have a superpower, what would it be?

Version Two—Get to know your sample question (Challenge Level):

Make the game more challenging by asking the partners to share a story, rather than a few-word answer. Students need to remember the stories and be prepared to share the stories when they return to their seats.

Sample Story Prompts:

1. Tell a story about a time you visited a really beautiful place.
2. Tell a story about how you met one of your friends.
3. Tell a story about one of the scariest thing you've ever done.
4. Tell a story about the best birthday you can remember.
5. Tell a story about one of your favorite childhood experiences.
6. Tell a story about a pet you have known.
7. Tell a story about one of your favorite holiday traditions.
8. Tell a story about one of the hardest things you have ever done.

Version Three—Curriculum content versions:

Create questions based on your content. You could use this game to review for an upcoming test, as a formative assessment, or to explore class readings.

Some possibilities include:

- Cut review or discussion questions into strips and give each pair a different question to discuss when they bond.
- Tell your partner their favorite idea/concept/part of a reading assignment.
- Choose one character from a book you are reading and discuss what they think that character's favorite food is and why.
- Choose your favorite character from a book you are reading and discuss what you like about them.
- Choose an event/person from a historical event you have been studying and discuss the significance of that event/person.