Word Wizards

Mission: the thief locked the mascot behind a hidden word, and guessing won't crack it. Win the games, spell the password on the whiteboard, whisper it, open the box, free the mascot. Character trait today: **Self-Awareness**.

1 · Categories (5–16 min) — call a category and a letter, go around fast before the beat

Warm-up wide categories (Animals, Foods, Colors), common letter (B, S, T). "Say the first word that pops up, then notice how it popped up."

Tighter narrow it (Kitchen things, Sports, School subjects), trickier letter. Ask a kid to name their strategy before you snap.

Speed faster beat, no-repeat across the whole circle. Reward the kid who noticed their own trick and used it.

Diff TK–2: big easy categories, slow beat, nobody really out. 3–8: hard categories, no-repeat rule, shrinking clock, elimination to a single champion, students call the categories and judge close calls.

2 · Anagram Attack (16–31 min) — scrambled word on the board, teams unscramble, fastest scores

Easy TCA→CAT, GDO→DOG, NUS→SUN, THA→HAT, LBTEA→TABLE, RATS→STAR/ARTS/TARS.

Medium NELSTI→LISTEN/SILENT, MAETS→TEAMS/MEATS/STEAM, CREAS→CARES/RACES/SCARE. Multiple right answers, so any real word from the letters wins.

Diff TK–2: 3-letter words, big spaced letters, every guess cheered. 3–8: 6–8 letters with multiple valid answers, visible timer, head-to-head (second word steals a bonus), teams create an anagram for a rival to crack.

3 · Word Cipher (31–45 min) — riddles whose first letters spell the box password

OWL OPEN (opposite of closed), WRAP (do to a present), LION (big cat that roars). First letters O-W-L, and it is the mascot.

SUN SNAKE, UMBRELLA, NEST. First letters S-U-N. Good for a first round or a younger team.

Diff TK–2: short SUN set, read clues aloud, blank line per letter. 3–8: longer word (SOLVE, CLEVER), add a cipher (shift by one or reverse the word), beat-the-clock with a wrong-guess penalty (15-sec lockout). Teams design a puzzle for a rival and referee it.

4 · Finale + Wristband (45–60 min)

Open Winning team whispers then announces the password to the room, coach turns the key, mascot lifts out, big cheer. Optional "thief's note" inside: "You out-worded my puzzle. I surrender!"

Award the **Self-Awareness** trait wristband to detectives who named how they think ("I pictured the word", "I'm fast at first letters", "I tried the vowels first").

3–8 For older kids and the two middle schools, run the whole hour competitive: fixed teams, score every game on the whiteboard, visible timer each round, crown a champion here. Games bank adds **Detective Mafia** (2–3 Culprits + a Detective, 5–7 min rounds) — the one middle schoolers ask to replay.

Detective's Oath (say together, magnifiers up): I am a detective. / My brain is my best tool. / I don't guess, I reason. / I follow the clues to the truth.