Speed Stack Showdown

Mission: the thief rigged the mascot's lock to a cup code, and only steady hands and a quick mind crack it. Win the cup games, decode the cipher on the cups, whisper the password, open the box, free the mascot. Character trait today: **Self-Awareness**.

1 · Speed Stack Race (5–16 min) — 60-second heats, build the pyramid, collapse it, hands up

Warm-up 3-2-1 pyramid (6 cups). Build up, collapse to one stack, hands on heads. Coach the calm: "slow is smooth, smooth is fast."

Taller 4-3-2-1 pyramid (10 cups). More cups, more topples, steady teams pull ahead.

Bust 4-3-2-1, collapse, rebuild once, all in 60 seconds. First team done with hands up wins the heat. Toppled = rebuild, no do-over.

Diff TK–2: 3-cup triangle, no clock, cheer every build. 3–8: 6-5-4-3-2-1 (21 cups) with a required build-collapse-rebuild sequence, head-to-head bracket to a champion. Students run the timer and referee.

2 · Pattern Stack (16–31 min) — call or flash a colored-cup pattern, fastest correct rebuild scores

Called 3-cup pattern said aloud twice ("red, blue, red"). Teams stack it, everyone gets one right.

Flashed 4-cup pattern held up 5 seconds then hidden ("green, green, blue, red"). Now they must notice and remember.

Invent each team builds a secret 4–5-cup pattern, flashes it to a rival for 5 seconds, rival rebuilds it. Wrong order does not score.

Diff TK–2: 2–3 cups, colors called aloud and left in view, coach reads slowly. 3–8: 6–8-cup patterns, 3-second flash only, elimination heats to one team, students run the game from the front and judge rebuilds.

3 · Stack the Code (31–45 min) — number the lettered cups, order them, read the password

STACK 5 cups: S=1, T=2, A=3, C=4, K=5. Scramble the stack. Board rule: "order the cups 1 to 5, read the letters top to bottom." Answer 1-2-3-4-5 = STACK.

CUP 3 cups: C=1, U=2, P=3. Same rule, order 1 to 3. Answer = CUP. Good for a first round or younger team.

Diff TK–2: use CUP, numbers face up, coach helps sort 1-2-3, draw a blank line per letter. 3–8: +1 shift cipher — cups read R-S-Z-B-J, "shift each letter forward one" spells STACK; wrong whisper = 30-second lockout; teams design their own cup code for a rival and check the answer.

4 · Finale + Wristband (45–60 min)

Open Winning team whispers then announces the password (STACK) to the room, coach turns the key, mascot lifts out, big cheer. Optional "thief's note" inside: "Steady hands beat my code. I surrender!"

Award the **Self-Awareness** trait wristband to detectives who noticed themselves and steadied up before they acted ("I felt myself rushing and slowed down", "I took a breath before I stacked").

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.