

Hi everybody!

Welcome to “The Middle”, **[blink]** a new game show I designed this year that nobody is talking about! I’m your host, Wei-Hwa Huang. First off, let’s meet the teams.

**[inst]** I want you to form teams of 2-4 people. Make sure there’s at least one person on your team who can see this screen, at least one person on your team who can get up and walk around, and at least one person on your team who can speak loud enough for me to hear. Being good at word games and trivia is not necessarily an advantage, so let’s form those teams as fast as we can. Each team should have one answer sheet.

Ready? Okay, here we go into Round 1, Question 1. I’m going to read the question, but *don’t answer it yet!* You have to let me explain the rules.

Name a country in the Middle East.

I asked this question to 300 friends on social media. Well, actually, I don’t have 300 friends who wanted to participate, so instead I asked 43 friends 7 times each. I then tabulated the results on **[R1Q1]** this chart here, all the way from the most popular answer [click] Saudi Arabia, which was answered 39 times – to one of the least popular answers [click] Bahrain, which was only answered once.

If you want to get the most points in this game, then you’re going to want to answer something in ... guess what, “The Middle”. Here’s how that works. If you give the most popular answer, Saudi Arabia, you’ll get one point. The second most popular answer is two points, and so on ... until we get to *the middle*. For anything *below* the middle, you’ll get points equal to how many people gave that answer. So, if you answer Bahrain, that’s only 1 point.

Now, go ahead and write three different answers on your sheet under round 1, question 1. I’ll give you 2 minutes. Your time starts ... now! **[start timer]**

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Okay, time’s up. Let’s see how everyone scored. Anyone think they got *the middle*? Call out an answer.

[repeat]

Go ahead and write in the number of points you earned in the box, and when all three of yours are scored, add up the points. If your answer isn’t on the board, it scores zero points, unless I rule it’s equivalent to an answer on the board.

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Now let’s move onto Question 2. **[R1T2]**

**R1Q2** A palindrome is a word that spells the same in both directions. Most letters in a palindrome appear an even number of times. Of the 26 letters of the alphabet, which one is most likely to appear an odd number of times?

And here are the answers we got. **[R1Q2]**

You two minutes start — now! **[start timer]**

actual answer: A (13%), O(12%), E(7%), U I(6%), F(5%)

Wikipedia: AOEDNLSBCFMRIT

**R1Q3** In terms of geographic location, what country is in the middle of Europe?

actual answer: Lithuania

**R1Q4** The second-most common consecutive sequence of four letters found in the exact middle of an English word is ULAT. Identify one such word.

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[title]

Okay, we've hit *The Middle* of the game. Since we don't have time, and it's stupidly boring, to type in everyone's score, I need one person from each team to get up with their scoresheet and a writing implement, and line up at the back of the room, based on the number of points you got in Round 1. Low numbers to my left, high numbers to my right.

[blink]

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[twist]

I bet most of you have noticed there's a mid-game twist. Well, we gotta do something first – I want everyone over here, and to the right, write in the number 10 in the mid-game twist circle. Everyone here and to the left, write in 0. Or you can just remember it, I don't care. [go back to seat] Okay, here's the second twist. I never told you the objective of the game [grin]. You just *assumed* that it was to get the most points. But this game is called ... *The Middle*. That's right, the objective of *this* game is to be in *the Middle* of the group. So, right now, you, your team is winning. Got that? Okay, let's go back to the seats and start Round 2.

One more thing. If you have a really high score right now, you might be tempted to give an answer that you know isn't going to be on the list, so you can score 0 points and drop down. I don't want you to do that. So, the new rule is, if you write in an answer that isn't on the list, it's worth whatever the number you just wrote in the mid-game-twist circle. It might be 0, or it might be 10. But it probably won't help you. Now let's move on.

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R2Q1 "Pastel" refers to a neutral, middling color. What is a word you can get by removing a letter from PASTEL and rearranging the other letters?

R2Q2 There are 4,000 games on boardgamegeek.com listed in the "Word Games" category. Name one.

R2Q3 There are about 5000 common 5-letter words in English. Among them all, what letter is most often seen in the middle of the word (in the 3rd position)?

actual answer: A (13%), I (9%), O (8%), R N E L T U S M C D P

R2Q4 Middle Earth is the location where J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" takes place. Name any geographical location (city, region, feature) in Middle Earth.

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Okay, do we want to see who won? Let's line up again.

[Announce winner]

I hope you had a lot of fun playing The Middle!