

# WORDS WITH

## Forbidden users

**F**ourbidden is a mathematical card game to promote the use of mathematical language devised by Phil Dodd and published by ATM.

There are now two packs of Fourbidden cards, the latest designed with KS3 students in mind. There are 52 cards in each set, on each card a familiar mathematical term is printed on the left, with four related words shown on the right hand side of the card. There is a good explanation on different ways of using the pack.

### Kathryn Vaughn

*Worle School, Weston-Super-Mare*

During the summer term my Y8 top set had been focusing on various aspects of geometry, ranging from circles and loci to Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry. Alongside these studies I frequently directed the pupils to consider what were the minimum criteria for using each new skill or formula, and so to consider what defined the ideas encountered. Consequently they were well primed for playing *Fourbidden*!

As I knew that these Y8 pupils enjoyed a challenge I introduced *Fourbidden* with only one example and played against a stopwatch. The aim was for the pupil with the card to get the rest of the class to guess the word on the left hand side of the card, whilst not using any of the words on the right to help describe it . . . and in less than 1 minute. The first contender was selected by merit of having correctly worked out my example word and had to stand at the front in order to address the class. Robert went first and amused us all by asking me out loud how to say 'congruent' (his answer!) and then taking a moment to realise that he then required another card. This set a relaxed tone and other, initially less-confident, pupils became keen to participate, which was pleasing. The secondary issue of choosing people, who had their hands up to answer, increased the tension of trying to define ideas within a minute. If the word was not guessed correctly in the time limit, the class always asked to carry on until they got there, which was a sign of how well motivated they were by the game. The prize for succeeding in the challenge was a merit award for the cardholder. This said it was very clear, from their big smiles, that the individuals concerned viewed their personal success as the ultimate prize.

### Julie Gibbon

*Haydon Bridge High School*

I have used *Fourbidden* with special needs secondary students. I start by choosing a card that I think the



student will find easy and then give them either one, two, three or all of the words given on the right hand side of the card, until they guess the word on the left hand side. It is then their turn to choose a card for me to guess. When they need help reading the words on the card they just cover up the left hand side so that I cannot see it. We carry on in this way for a short while, with me choosing cards according to their success rate, stretching them a little further each time and they usually choose words that they perceive are hard for me to guess. We always end with a successful guess for the student.

### Helen Williams

*MT editor, Cornwall*

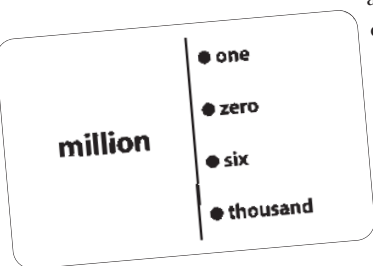
Y6 'booster' classes . . . (massaging the child or massaging the results?)

I received my *Fourbidden* pack and was dying to see whether it would work for me. At one of my 'booster' sessions I showed them the pack and asked them if they would play it with me at the end of the session, as I had not tried it before.

I started by picking a card I thought they would know (million) and describing it myself without using any of the words on the right-hand side. This was more difficult than I thought. But we got there. They were all eager to have a turn. And these particular children were very under-confident mathematicians.

Over the following four or five sessions, we played it towards the end of each session, as a reward for our hard work. They would come bouncing in demanding when we could play it and how long for – "I've got a really good idea for one word, Miss". We tried all the variations, drawing was fun and revealing! But we still prefer the original. I found it most successful when they played in pairs and were given time to go through the pack and choose a word they both felt confident in describing. It was an excellent assessment exercise, in terms of the words they chose ('easy-peasy' or 'I think I know this one'), whether they gave up when things got difficult (tenacity versus flightiness?), and gradually as the weeks passed, whether they could give a guiding, overall description to 'tune us in', eg "This is a number word, right?".

I never go into a school without a *Fourbidden* pack in my pocket.



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