

# In Beentw

Melchett: Perhaps some pleasant word game?

Blackadder: Yes, all right. Make a sentence out of the following words: face, sodding, your, shut.  
Black Adder II, episode 6: *Chains*

The game “In Between” is played like this: You pick a word, and I try to guess it. After each guess, you tell me whether your secret word is alphabetically before or after my guess.

For example, suppose you pick HELP. I might guess MONEY, and you would say that MONEY is *after* your secret word. Then I might guess GLOVE, and you would say that GLOVE is *before* your secret word. At this point I know that your word is In Between GLOVE and MONEY, so I might guess JOIN. Continuing in this way I eventually get HELP.

We’re going to play the following variation on In Between: Before you compare my guess with your secret word, you “sort” both the secret word and the guess by rearranging their letters in alphabetical order. Then you report whether the *sorted* guess is alphabetically before or after the *sorted* secret word.

For example, suppose your secret word is LOVE and my first guess is RAPTURE. Sorting the letters of each word, you compare ELOV with AEPRRTU and report that RAPTURE is *before* your secret word (since AEPRRTU is alphabetically before ELOV). It’s completely irrelevant that normally RAPTURE comes *after* LOVE.

So I now need to find a guess that’s after RAPTURE. One possibility is NURSE: ENRSU is alphabetically after AEPRRTU, so in this game NURSE comes after RAPTURE and is a reasonable next guess.

You compare ENRSU to ELOV and report that NURSE is *after* your secret word. Now I know that your secret word is after RAPTURE and before NURSE; I must next search for a guess that is In Beentw these two bounds. Continuing in this way I eventually find LOVE.

Here are a few more examples:

- After TWADDLE you get AMENDS, since ADDELTW precedes ADEMNS.
- EDGE comes before GREEDY, since DEEG precedes DEEGRY.
- ELATION is neither before nor after TOENAIL, since the sorted form of each is AEILONT. This happens with any anagrams.

We play this game with small teams (two or three people each). The teams play in pairs. Each team starts by picking a secret word. Then one team makes a guess and the other reports whether the guess is before or after their secret word. Next the second team guesses and the first team reports. The teams continue in this way, alternating guesses, until each team has guessed the other’s word. Each team’s goal is to discover the other team’s secret word in as few guesses as possible.

Here are a few other points:

1. If the secret word is ELATION, then TOENAIL is a winning guess. That is, guessing an anagram is just as good as guessing the secret word itself.
2. Words should not contain hyphens, apostrophes, or foreign accents. As usual, all words should be common and familiar to all, lest the curse of Hillary Clinton fall upon you.
3. We are providing a preprinted form to help you keep track of your guesses. You don't have to use it if you don't want to.
4. Be sure your answers are correct! If at any time a team is found to have responded wrongly to a guess, that team is disqualified.
5. To help you report quickly and accurately on guesses, each team should write down its secret word—both sorted and unsorted—before the guessing begins. (I won't mention that the real purpose of this rule is to forestall fraud.) Also, when you make a guess, you should present your guess to the other team both sorted and unsorted.
6. For the first round, pick a target word with no more than seven letters. After that the teams should agree on a length limit for target words. Longer words are harder and will take longer; shorter words are easier. There is never a length restriction on guess words (and short guess words suffice for the first few guesses).