Conundrums: Facilitator Guide

🎯 Purpose

Conundrums is a fast-paced word puzzle activity. Key terms are scrambled and presented to learners as anagrams, and players have one minute to identify each word and type it correctly. The activity strengthens recall of vocabulary through pattern recognition and time-pressured problem-solving.

Conundrums promote quick thinking, spelling accuracy and confidence with subject-specific language, making it well suited to revision and reinforcement of key terms in Health and Life Sciences topics.

🎓 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the activity, students should be able to:

- Recognise and correctly spell key subject terminology.
- Recall vocabulary quickly under time pressure.
- Use letter patterns and word structure to decode unfamiliar arrangements.
- Build confidence with specialist terms.
- Reflect on which terms are secure and which need further review.

📝 Before You Start

Create Your Activity

Each game contains up to eight conundrums — one word per puzzle.

1. Decide on the learning objective or topic.
2. Choose up to eight key words that reinforce that topic.
3. Enter one word per box in the setup form.
4. Click Submit to prepare the game.

Choosing Good Words

- Use single terms — anagram-style puzzles work best with individual words rather than phrases.
- Aim for 5–10 letters. Very short words are trivially easy; very long words become frustrating within the one-minute limit.
- Mix easy and challenging words to keep learners of different confidence levels engaged.
- Avoid words with unusual letter combinations that are impossible to guess without a clear topic in mind.

Tip: introduce the topic before the game starts. Knowing "we're working on anatomy today" gives learners a mental frame for interpreting the scrambled letters.

How to Play

Step 1 – Enter the Words

Enter up to eight words in the setup form and click Submit. These become the game's conundrums.

Step 2 – Play the Puzzles

Press START to begin. The letters of the first word appear as blue circles on the screen in a scrambled order. Learners have one minute — shown on a circular countdown timer — to work out the word and type it into the answer box.

- **ENTER** submits the current answer.
- Feedback appears immediately: **green** for correct, **red** for incorrect.
- **Next** moves on to the next conundrum.
- If the timer runs out, the word is not solved. Move on to the next.

Step 3 – Review and Discuss

Once all conundrums have been attempted, review each word with the group:

- Which words were solved quickly?
- Which caused the most difficulty?
- Discuss the meaning and context of each term.

The discussion at the end reinforces both spelling and understanding.

Example Activity

Topic: Human Anatomy

Word (entered by facilitator)	Shown as (example scramble)
HEART	T · R · A · E · H
LIVER	R · E · V · I · L
FEMUR	M · U · F · R · E
KIDNEY	D · E · K · Y · I · N
PELVIS	L · V · S · E · P · I
SPLEEN	L · E · P · N · E · S
CORTEX	X · O · T · R · C · E

Learners see the scrambled letters on-screen and race the clock to identify each term.

Facilitator Tips

Keep the pace lively and the discussion supportive. Useful techniques include:

- Set a clear theme before starting so learners know what kind of vocabulary to expect.

- Encourage learners to say each guess aloud before typing — this often helps them "hear" the correct word.
- If running the game competitively, use one screen per team and award points for correct answers within the minute.
- After each round, briefly discuss the correct word and its meaning to reinforce learning.
- Reuse difficult words in a later round to boost retention.

📖 Teaching Ideas

Conundrums can be used for:

- Revision sessions
- Interactive lectures
- Recap of key terminology
- Team-Based Learning (TBL)
- Icebreaker for new cohorts
- Warm-up before a formal assessment
- End-of-topic energiser
- Vocabulary reinforcement in clinical or scientific terminology
- Formative assessment

🗣️ Debrief Questions

Discuss the activity using questions such as:

- Which words were easiest to unscramble, and why?
- Which took the longest, and what strategies did you use to solve them?
- Were there any of these terms you weren't confident with?
- What context clues helped you identify each word?
- How does spelling terminology accurately support your written work and clinical communication?

Encourage students to reflect on which terms they now feel confident with and which they want to revisit.

💥 Educational Benefits

Conundrums support active learning by combining:

- Active retrieval practice
- Pattern recognition
- Vocabulary reinforcement
- Time-pressured recall
- Immediate formative feedback
- Spelling accuracy

- Confidence with specialist terminology

By pairing rapid retrieval with correct spelling, the activity reinforces both memory and precision — essential foundations for accurate written work and effective clinical communication within Health and Life Sciences.