

## An Introduction to Senior Brain Games

Most of us have seen at least a single episode of *Jeopardy* on television. The format of Senior Brain Games is similar in some ways, different in others. There is a host, but rather than three individual players there are three teams of three players each, totaling nine players. (Each team should also have one alternate player in case someone is unable to compete on game day.) Teams work together to answer the questions presented, pooling their knowledge base. If each team member comes up with a different answer, they must also be able to work together to choose which answer to submit.

Like *Jeopardy*, there is also an element of wagering, as well as risk, based upon point values and confidence in a specific category. Senior Brain Games is both strategy based and knowledge based, in other words.

## The Rules of Senior Brain Games

As stated, there are three teams. Each team consists of three players. Teams answer five questions from a variety of categories over four rounds. The winning team is the one with the most points won by the end of the game.

At the beginning of each round, each team is given a set of five answer sheets. These sheets are blank except for pre-printed team names or numbers and a point value: 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10. Each point value will be available to a team only once in a round. When a team answers a question, they determine their level of confidence in their answer, then choose the number of points they hope to earn with their answer. If the answer is incorrect, no points are awarded and that point value may not be used again during the same round; the answer sheet is taken. If the answer provided is correct, then the awarded points are determined by the answer sheet used. For example:

During competition, Team 1, Team 2, and Team 3 are asked, "Who was President of the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis?" Team 1, not entirely confident in their answer, writes John F. Kennedy on the four-point answer sheet. Team 2, extremely confident in their answer, writes Kennedy on their ten-point answer sheet. Team 3, clueless, writes Ronald Reagan on their two-point answer sheet.

Teams 1 and 2 are both correct, but Team 2 leaps ahead of Team 1 by six points because they answered with their ten-point answer sheet. The points are awarded for accuracy, but the number of points awarded (or risked) is chosen by the individual teams. Team 3 answered incorrectly, but they anticipated that and risked only their two-point answer

sheet. They held their higher value answer sheets for later in the round, when they may feel more confident about their answers to different questions.

Just remember, for each question there must be a written answer on a game sheet with a designated value and, right or wrong, that sheet is collected so that it cannot be reused.

## Round 4: The Double Down Round

Round 4 is called the “Double Down Round,” in which the original point values are doubled. Each team receives the following answer sheet point values: 4, 8, 12, 16, and 20. This creates a comeback opportunity for a team that may have performed poorly early in the game. Aside from the change in point values, the nature of the game is the same. If a team feels *very* confident about an answer, they would wager twenty points; if the team had *no* idea, then the team would wager four.

At the end of each round, teams are given their totals—both for the individual round, as well as cumulative points for all rounds after the first. Since the cumulative total will determine the final winner, a team could potentially lose an individual round but still win the overall contest by answering correctly and earning as many points as possible in the other rounds.

There are no consequences for ties during individual rounds because it is the point totals at game’s end that determine a winner. Should two (or more) teams be tied at the end of the fourth round, the teams involved will be offered a “tie breaker” question. The question is answered with a quantity, and the winning team is the one that gets closest to the correct number, or amount, without going over. For example, the question could be: “Approximately how many days did it take Apollo 11 astronauts to get to the moon?” The answer is three days. If Team 1 answered five days and Team 2 answered two days, then Team 2 would claim the win, ending the game.

## Preparation

The method of preparation is open to each team. Anyone sent these rules was also provided with sources of optional questions and answers. Training could also include games of Trivial Pursuit, random questions from trivia books, or regular viewings of televised game shows, like *Jeopardy* or *Wheel of Fortune*. There are even trivia games for computers and entertainment consoles. Regardless of the source of practice questions, it is important to remember that the game is designed to stimulate a team effort, so it is recommended that at least some practice involves a discussion of final answers, as well as decisions regarding point values. For teams to compete successfully, they must be able to reach agreement. Ideally, too, teams would be

made up of players with a variety of backgrounds, interests, and knowledge; each team member's weakness should be another's strength.

## The Main Event

Just remember, regardless of how you prepare, the competition in Nashville will involve four rounds. Rounds 1-3 will consist of point values 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10. Round 4, the Double Down Round, will consist of point values 4, 8, 12, 16, and 20. During each round, each team will be given pre-printed sheets with those point values. Answers are written on those same sheets. Also, keep in mind that while answer time may be flexible when practicing or in friendly competition prior to the main event, the allotted answer time for the final competition will likely fall between 45-60 seconds. There will be an element of time, in other words, so it would be wise to at least occasionally play by the clock when training.

## Judges and Disputes

When playing a game like this, something is bound to go wrong, even during a friendly game. There are numerous ways to find or create trivia questions and answers, but a question that is clear for one person may not be for another. Likewise, answers from trivia sources can be wrong, or there may be multiple correct answers but only one provided by the source. Time changes some answers—the answer to a question about the world's tallest building, for instance. The world's tallest building in 2013 may become the world's second tallest building in 2014, after an even taller building is completed. These are just a few examples; there are many more.

The best way to deal with disputes is to have a designated judge, or judges, on hand during a game. If you have more than one judge, it is best to have an odd-numbered group. Judges should be neutral and should understand that they are present to assist all teams in resolving a dispute. If possible, judges should be equipped with a computer and internet access to allow them to research disputed questions or answers while the game is still underway.

All disputes must be voiced during a game so that judgement can be rendered. Once a winner has been declared, that winner stands even if it is later discovered that points were awarded or withheld by mistake.