

# The One Question Rule

BUILD CHALLENGE

SKILL: PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE

50 MINUTES

## RECOMMENDED AGE RANGE

Ages 8–14 — old enough to feel genuinely challenged and competitive enough to keep trying anyway.

## WHAT YOU NEED

20 index cards

1 roll of tape

10 paperclips

5 straws

Small rubber ball (ping pong or bouncy)

1 sticky note per player (labeled “My Question”)

A timer

## ACTIVITY STEPS

- 01 Hand Out the Tokens.** Give each player one sticky note labeled “My Question.” This is their single help token for the entire activity. They can hand it to a parent to ask one question at any point during the build — or save it and never use it.
- 02 State the Challenge.** Using only the provided materials, build a track, ramp, or structure that rolls the ball from a starting line to a finish line at least three feet away without anyone touching the ball after the first push. It must stay on the table.
- 03 Build in Silence.** Set a 35-minute timer. Parents stay visible but completely silent — no hints, no reactions, no guidance unless a question token is handed over. When a token is spent, the parent answers only the one question asked, nothing more.
- 04 Official Launch.** When time is up or someone succeeds, everyone stops. Test any completed designs with an official timed launch. Measure the distance. Celebrate what got built, whether it crossed the finish line or not.
- 05 The Debrief.** Spend 10 minutes on the real conversation: Where did you almost quit? Did you spend your question — and if so, was it worth it? If you saved it, what kept you going when you felt stuck? Listen for the difference between “I felt stuck” and “I actually hit my limit.” That gap is what you came here to build.

### THE DEEPER LESSON

*When kids have unlimited access to AI or adult help, they often reach for it the moment they feel uncomfortable, long before they have hit their actual limit. This activity makes help a finite, irreversible resource, so kids have to find out what they are capable of before tapping out. That experience is exactly what the article describes. And the debrief connects the feeling directly to the choices they make every time an AI tool is one click away.*

### CONVERSATION STARTER

*If you could have asked for help at any moment but chose not to, what made you keep trying on your own?*