THIS WEEKEND'S FAMILY ACTIVITY

The First Draft Race

GAME | SKILL: LEARNING SEQUENCE | 45 MINUTES

RECOMMENDED AGE RANGE

Ages 8 to 14 — old enough to understand why the order of learning matters, young enough that the habit of attempting first is still forming.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Paper and pens for each player
- A timer (phone works fine)
- One device with internet access
- 3–5 thinking questions (parent writes these in advance)

ACTIVITY STEPS

01 **Write the Question Slips.** Before the activity, the parent writes 3 to 5 open-ended questions on slips of paper. Good questions have no single right answer. Examples: "Why do some habits stick and others fade?" or "What makes a person actually trustworthy?" or "If you could change one rule at your school, what would it be and why?" Fold the slips and set them face-down. Everyone draws one and reads it silently.

02 **The First Draft.** Set the timer for 8 minutes. Everyone writes their best answer on paper, alone, with no devices. The one rule: you do not have to be right, you have to try. Incomplete and uncertain is fine. Stuck and pushing through counts. This step is the most important, because it is the step that most kids skip when AI is available.

03 **Share and Notice.** Everyone reads their question and first draft aloud. After each reading, the group asks: what was the hardest part of your first attempt? Notice where someone surprised you with an idea no one else had. Do not evaluate the answers yet. This is about recognizing what genuine first-attempt thinking feels like, not about who got it right.

04 **The AI Round.** Pick the one question that got the most interesting family answers. Together, type it into an AI tool and read the response aloud. Then ask two questions: What did the AI include that no one thought of? What did someone in your family say that the AI missed entirely? Both answers are usually yes — and both matter.

05 **The Final Draft.** Each person rewrites their answer one more time. The rule: the final draft must include at least one idea that was not in the AI response. One sentence counts. The goal is a final answer that is better than

either the first draft alone or the AI version alone. A child who can do this has understood what Learning Sequence means in practice.

THE DEEPER LESSON

A team of thirty learning scientists recently found that the moment a student reaches for AI matters as much as whether they use it. Students who use AI at the very start of learning something new tend to build weaker memory for it, because the struggle of that first attempt is where encoding happens. Students who use AI instead of finishing their own thinking at the end miss the synthesis that builds real understanding. The First Draft Race recreates the correct sequence on purpose: attempt first, compare in the middle, synthesize last. The final answer your child writes is built on genuine thinking, not borrowed from a machine.

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you had started with the AI answer instead of writing your own first draft, do you think your final answer would have been better, worse, or just different, and why?