UTI Instructions: Biochemistry Taboo

Introduction:
In this activity, students will review basic vocabulary of biochemistry by playing the common game Taboo. In Taboo, individuals coax their team members in saying a particular word by describing that word, without themselves saying the forbidden words. In this case, the target word is above the line; forbidden words lie below the line. Students practice thinking about familiar chemistry words in new ways.

Procedure:
Divide students into teams of three or four, then create matches between teams. Teams in a match trade off between refereeing (for the forbidden words) and guessing words. Have each set of teams do a best of five rounds match, keeping track of total words guessed. *Teams score one point for each correct guess AND are penalized one point for each description that uses non-chemistry clues.* Each round proceeds for two minutes – the UTI acts as the master timer. Congratulate the team with the most words identified (perhaps provide a prize).

To debrief the activity, ask students to jot down two or three descriptions that were especially useful in helping them identify a vocabulary word. Have students report on their key descriptions, thereby creating a master list of alternatives that could be used for quizzes, tests, or review. Emphasize any themes that occur; for example, differentiation between elements/atoms and complex molecules.

At the end of the session, allow students to shuffle through the cards in the teams to record any words with which they are unfamiliar. Remind students that they are responsible for being familiar with the concepts, comfortable discussing them, and capable of creating alternative descriptions of them.