Ecosystem Jenga

This game is an interactive way to teach students about the delicate balance of ecosystems, particularly saltmarsh environments.

YOU WILL NEED

- **Jenga Blocks:** Use a standard Jenga set or any similar stackable, rectangular blocks.
- **Labels:** Label each block with different components of the saltmarsh ecosystem.
    - **Flora:** Salt Grass, Cordgrass, Mangroves
    - **Fauna:** Migratory Birds, Fish Species, Crustaceans, Insects, Frogs etc.
    - **Physical Factors:** Water Salinity, Soil Type, Sunlight
    - **Human Impact:** Pollution, Urban Development, Conservation Efforts

HOW TO PLAY

1. Stack the blocks in sets of three, layer by layer, as in traditional Jenga, with each layer perpendicular to the previous one.
2. Players take turns removing one block at a time from any level of the tower (except the one just below the incomplete top level). After removing a block, the player places it on the topmost level to complete it. When a player pulls a block, they must read aloud what is written on it and explain (or discuss) how that particular factor affects the saltmarsh ecosystem. For example, pulling a "Mangroves" block might prompt a discussion on how mangroves protect coastal areas from erosion.
3. The game continues until the tower falls. The last player to successfully place a block without causing the tower to topple wins the game. After the tower falls, discuss as a group which elements (blocks) were removed before the collapse, reflecting on how the removal of certain components can destabilize an ecosystem.

This game helps students see how various elements in an ecosystem depend on each other. Removing certain blocks will make the structure (ecosystem) more unstable, mirroring real-world consequences in natural environments. By including human impact factors as blocks, students learn about the role of human actions in preserving or endangering ecosystems.

Players need to think critically about which block to remove, considering both the physical stability of the tower and the ecological significance of the block's label.

Students recognise the connectedness of, and interactions between people, places and events.