



One-Word Story

Tell a story together, one word per person, and try to bring it to an ending that makes sense.

Players 3–12 (best with 4–8)

Play time 5–20 min

Materials No materials

Movement Seated

QUICK RULES

1. Pick a story title.
2. Going round the circle, each player adds exactly one word.
3. Keep sentences grammatical — small words like "the" and "and" count as a turn.
4. Anyone can end a sentence by saying "full stop". Finish the story within three trips round the circle.

SET UP

1. Sit in a circle so that turn order is automatic.
2. Choose a title. A title gives the story a direction — "The Day the Bakery Ran Out of Flour".
3. Explain the single most useful tip: say the obvious next word. The story gets funny on its own.
4. Choose who starts. The traditional first word is "Once".

HOW TO PLAY

1. The first player says one word to begin the story.
2. Each player in turn adds exactly one word that continues the sentence grammatically.
3. A player may say 'full stop' instead of a word to end the sentence. The next player begins a new sentence.
4. Players should not pause to plan — the word comes within a few seconds.
5. Names count as one word. So do hyphenated words, if the group is feeling generous.
6. After two full trips round the circle, the host calls 'last lap'. The group must land an ending during the third trip.
7. The player who says the story's final word chooses the next title.

HOW THE GAME ENDS

Each story ends when the group lands a final sentence during the third trip round the circle. Play three or four stories and stop. There is no winner; the reward is the retelling. If a story is going nowhere after two trips, the host can declare "The End" and start a new title.

PLAYING SEATED

Played seated by default. No step requires standing or moving.

TIPS FOR THE HOST

- Reassure people that "and" or "the" is a perfectly good contribution. Trying to be clever with every word stalls the story.
- If one player keeps pulling the story towards their own joke, switch to the three-word variation so every turn carries more weight.
- For younger players, the host can repeat the sentence so far before each new word.
- Record nothing. Part of the fun is that the story only exists in the room.

VARIATIONS

Three-word story. Each player adds exactly three words. The story moves faster and makes more sense, which helps mixed-age groups and anyone finding one word at a time frustrating.

Fortunately, unfortunately. Players add a whole sentence each, alternating between sentences that begin "Fortunately..." and "Unfortunately...". The story swings between good and bad luck and nearly always finds its own ending.

STARTER IDEAS: STORY TITLES

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| ■ The Day the Bakery Ran Out of Flour | ■ The Umbrella That Would Not Close |
| ■ The Dog Who Applied for a Job | ■ The Night the Stars Went Out for Lunch |
| ■ The Last Bus Home | ■ The Cat Who Ran the Post Office |
| ■ The Mystery of the Missing Left Shoe | ■ An Unexpected Parcel |
| ■ A Picnic That Went Wrong | ■ The Slowest Race Ever Held |
| ■ The Quietest Town in the World | ■ The Lighthouse Keeper's Day Off |
| ■ Grandmother's Secret Invention | ■ The Snowman Who Stayed for Summer |

Times are editorial estimates, not test results. Editorially checked for clarity and consistency. We do not claim group playtesting for this page.