



Word Association

Keep a chain of connected words moving round the circle — say the first word the last one brings to mind, and be ready to explain the link.

Players 3–12 (best with 4–8)**Play time** 5–20 min**Materials** No materials**Movement** Seated

QUICK RULES

1. The first player says any word.
2. The next player says the first word it brings to mind — and so on round the circle.
3. Anyone can call "Link?" and the speaker must explain the connection.
4. Hesitate, repeat a word or fail to explain and you take a point. Fewest points wins.

SET UP

1. Sit so that the order of turns is clear.
2. Choose a starting player and a starting word — any ordinary noun will do.
3. Explain the pace. Each answer should come within about three seconds.
4. Decide whether to keep score. As a warm-up before another game, play without points.

HOW TO PLAY

1. The starting player says one word.
2. The player to their left responds with a single word that the previous word brings to mind.
3. Play continues clockwise at a steady pace.
4. At any time a player may challenge the most recent word by saying 'Link?'. The speaker has one sentence to explain the connection.
5. If the group accepts the link, the challenger takes a point. If not, the speaker takes it.
6. A player also takes a point for hesitating beyond the agreed pause, repeating a word already used in this chain, or answering with more than one word.
7. After any point, the player who took it starts a fresh chain with a new word.

HOW THE GAME ENDS

Play to a fixed number of chains — six is a good length — or stop when the first player reaches three points. The player with the fewest points wins. As a warm-up, simply play for five minutes and move on to the next game.

PLAYING SEATED

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

TIPS FOR THE HOST

- Demonstrate speed in the first round. A relaxed rhythm is fine, but long thinking defeats the point.
- Unexpected links are the heart of the game. Encourage "Link?" challenges out of curiosity, not suspicion.
- If anyone seems uncomfortable with speed, remove the pause rule and keep only "no repeats".
- Any association that could embarrass someone at the table can be waved away with "new word" and no point.

VARIATIONS

Disassociation. Each word must have nothing to do with the previous one. Anyone who can explain a convincing link between two consecutive words gives the speaker a point. It is surprisingly difficult and suits groups that have played the basic version before.

There and back. The group agrees on a start word and a target word — "umbrella" to "volcano", say — and tries to steer the chain to the target in as few turns as possible, working together.

STARTER IDEAS: STARTING WORDS

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| ▪ bridge | ▪ harbour |
| ▪ candle | ▪ blanket |
| ▪ suitcase | ▪ whistle |
| ▪ garden | ▪ market |
| ▪ thunder | ▪ lantern |
| ▪ ladder | ▪ pocket |
| ▪ marmalade | ▪ orchard |

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