WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

The Complete Game Collection

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HIVEMIND
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WORDS OF ADVICE

This isn’t the place for a complete guide to performing or teaching improv games. This book assumes that you know what improv looks like; what good and bad improv looks like; and how to move your group from one to the other. So what follows is some basic tips for how to use this book to run successful workshops and shows!

Prompts
The type prompts required for each game are listed alongside them. Prompts here means anything provided by the audience. Almost all games begin with a single simple prompt, which can be anything. However, I’d advise against asking your audience for ‘any’ prompt to start a scene; you’ll want to be more specific. Some of the more specific requests for prompts used by Whose Line Is It Anyway? or Hivemind include:

Object. You can make this more specific still to inspire the audience; an object you can carry, a rare object, an object you wouldn’t like to receive as a Christmas present, etc.

Profession. If you start the scene from a profession, try to avoid then simply performing a transaction scene featuring that profession and a client. You could instead depict two professionals working together, or doing something non-work related.

Location. It’s sometimes more inspiring to use a generic, non-geographical location (e.g. beach, skyscraper) than a geographical location (e.g. Bognor Regis; Mongolia).

Relationship. This can be family relationships, e.g. brother and sister, or something more open-ended, e.g. rivals; team members;

Genre. Many genre-based games call for genre prompts already. But in games which don’t, a strong genre can still be a fun way to inspire a team, opening up many ideas for scene locations and stock characters.

Word. This is the most open-ended prompt we’d use, but we’d always specify something further; 5-letter word, word beginning with C, etc.
**Props**

Many games call for a buzzer, as this is what the compères of the original TV shows used. Of course, this can be a bell, a whistle, a church organ, or anything else capable of making a short, sharp sound that onstage performers will respond to. Failing that, the compère can also just clap and shout!

Chairs are specified as props only for games where they’re essential, or extremely useful to the scene. But many groups will make a couple of chairs available for all scenes.

**Compère**

A compère is listed as part of the game only when the role is essential to the scene. But all games require a compère figure to introduce them and take opening prompts. Of course, this can be a regular performer, rather than a dedicated role for the entire set.
QUICKFIRE GAMES

These games use their prompts to create a kaleidoscope of rapid scenes and jokes. They make great warm-up games, whether for a workshop or for a live show, as they’re high energy, fast-paced, and don’t require any scene development.

How to Play

All performers go to the backline. Two performers step forward, and are put into frozen poses either by the other performers or by audience volunteers. They perform a quickfire scene justifying their poses. At any time, another performer can clap and/or call “Freeze!”; whereupon both onstage performers must freeze. The performer who clapped replaces one of the frozen performers, taking the same pose. They then begin a totally different scene, which provides a new justification for the new poses.

Tips

Onstage performers should aim for lots of physicality, so that their poses are constantly varying. Performers on the backline should look for good opportunities to call “Freeze!”, while the onstage performers are in interesting poses. Don’t worry about finding a justification before you enter; it will come to you as long as the poses are interesting! Keeping scenes under 20 seconds is best; just long enough to justify the poses and provide a punchline before it’s moved on.

How to Play

Two (or more) pairs of performers are given a prop each. These can be provided by the audience. They perform a series of rapid-fire alternating scenes where they interpret the prop as a different item, demonstrating what new thing it is.

Tips

This is great for teaching simple ‘yes and’; as one person comes up with a new identity for the prop, the partner can respond by using it in a similar way.
How to Play
The audience provide some kind of category, such as ‘board games’. Performers stand on the backline, and step forward to give examples of the world’s worst things in this category, together with a mime if appropriate. Once all performers seem to be out of ideas, the compere can find a new category from the audience.

Tips
These might involve wordplay on real examples in the category, or just imaginatively terrible ideas.
**COMPERE-LED GAMES**

In these games, the improvisers are mere puppets, forced to obey their compere’s every whim. For beginner groups, the teacher may like to act as compere, to push the performers in helpful directions. But for performing groups, you can rely on these games to exist primarily for the compere to give the onstage performers as hard a time as possible. For another level of challenge and chaos, try inviting an audience member onstage to play the role of compere...

### How to Play

Performers line up and narrate a story with a title given by the audience. Each performer is given an author or genre to imitate. The compere points at one person as a time, who must pass the narration seamlessly between themselves.

### Tips

If the audience is shy, you can construct a title yourself using more specific one-word audience suggestions. This teaches the skill of pulling the story back towards your style of story, competing softly for the direction of the story without blocking or cancelling what has been said already.

### Variants

Elimination-style, where any hesitation or flubbing by the performers causes them to be axed from the game until only one is standing. In this variant, you can also add additional challenges and constraints in each round. Or, to make things easier, you can remove the style requirement to allow performers to focus on telling a good story together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Compere, 4+</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Title, authors, genres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Props</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty</td>
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How to Play
The compere gets a list of emotions from the audience. Then, two performers start a scene from any prompt. The compere can pause the scene at any time to assign audience-suggested emotions to one of the performers.

Tips
This is a great beginner’s game; the compere can push the scene in interesting directions with the emotional offers, or subvert where things are going. Make sure to play the emotions you’re assigned to the hilt!
How to Play
Two performers start a scene from any prompt. When the compere calls “Reverse”, they must perform their scene backwards, line by line, until the compere calls “Forward” again.

Tips
Play close attention to what you seen, and don’t make the scene too complicated! Use strong physical gestures too, as these can be funny performed backwards. The compere may like to rewind the scene back beyond the start of the scene, at which point it becomes a game of Backwards Scene.

Variants
The compere could also call “Pause”, “Fast forward”, and “Fast rewind” (where the performers must go forwards/backwards in double time, their dialogue becoming high-pitched gibberish). This game is sometimes known as Remote Control, though don’t confuse it with the game of the same name in this set.

How to Play
Two or three performers start a scene based on any prompt. The compere interrupts at any time to provide instructions of any kind. They may need to re-enact the scene in different genres, or as different characters; they may need to start displaying a strong emotion; performing in a different language; or they can ask the audience for new instructions to introduce.

Tips
This is a free-form game that combines the gimmicks and restrictions of many other games. It’s great fun for groups that are already familiar with the more single-note game gimmicks. When the director pauses the scene, a meta-scene can begin, where performers adopt performer personas as they receive their directions. This game requires the compere to play a role themselves during the meta-scenes, rather than just sitting apart from the scene.
How to Play
The audience provide any scene-starting prompt, as well as a list of genres taken from film, theatre, TV, or even literature, video games, and more imaginative sources. As the scene is played, the compere pauses the scene to suggest a new genre that the scene must continue in.

Tips
The challenge here is to give the scene continuity, while allowing for the new genre to introduce sudden big changes to characters, plot direction, style of performance, and any other genre tropes that fit. As the compere, save the more dramatic or unusual genres for last.

Variants
Genre Replay – perform one short scene, then repeat it a couple of times, in different genres.

How to Play
Two performers start a scene from any prompt. The compere can buzz after any line of dialogue, at which point the speaker must repeat their line of dialogue with some kind of difference. This can happen multiple times in a row.

Tips
The change should be of one key bit of information in the line, rather than an unconnected new line. Two changes in a row are often used to achieve a comedic ‘rule of three’; the first change is minor or obvious, while the next one is more outlandish. The compere can also change a given action or noise instead of dialogue.

Variants
One variant is for performers to try and re-enact a scene from an audience member’s life; the audience member is allowed to buzz when they get a detail wrong, which of course only prompts increasingly wrong details to replace it.
## How to Play

Each performer is assigned a TV (or sometimes broader) genre by the audience. They then deliver a TV show in that style, each on the same audience-suggested topic. The compere switches between these shows by pointing an imaginary remote control at each performer.

## Tips

The other performers can support each other’s TV shows too, by entering as other characters – but must remember which TV show is theirs if pointed at!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Topic, TV genres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Props</td>
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<td>Difficulty</td>
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CONSTRAINT GAMES

Improvisers like nothing more than making life hard for each other…or themselves. These games all revolve around a central challenge or constraint for the performers to adhere to, while trying to perform a scene. There’s often a competitive element to these kinds of games.

These games are good for competent improvisers who have mastered the basics and are ready to stretch themselves.

How to Play
Two or more performers perform a scene where each line of dialogue must start with the next letter of the alphabet, until every letter has been used.

Tips
Trying to set up your scene partner with an obvious word to start with can be funny and help you practise chivalry. The audience love seeing you squirm as the challenging letters come up. Some groups allow words starting with "Ex-" to be used for X.

Variants
This is sometimes known as 60-Second Alphabet or 90-Second Alphabet, where the scene must be completed within the given time limit.

How to Play
Two or three performers play a scene from end to beginning. They must both move backwards, and say each line of dialogue in reverse order.

Tips
This is a great opportunity to set up your scene partner; for example, by answering a question they can then ask, or giving a strong emotional reaction to something they can then do. Remote Control is a good game to play first, to get the hang of the backward dialogue.
How to Play
Two or more performers perform a scene from any prompt, where every instance of a given letter must be changed to another given letter. For example, if all Ms become Ns, then “minimalism” will become “nininalism”. The change only need happen in one direction – Ns don’t need to become Ms.

Tips
Don’t go for the most common letters to change, otherwise you’ll be tripping over every word, and lines of dialogue will become nonsensical – stick to ones that score a 3 or above in Scrabble. But then find the most challenging words to say occasionally, such as “nininalism” – or force your scene partner to try and say them!

How to Play
A scene from any audience prompt is performed, while all the performers are maintaining fixed facial expressions, as decided by the audience.

Tips
The comedy here mostly comes from exhibiting strong emotions that are in contrast with your facial expressions – you’re forced to convey these via speaking, or via strong body language.

How to Play
Each performer in the scene is assigned a number. Each of their lines of dialogue must contain exactly that number of words. The scene can start with any audience-suggested prompt.

Tips
Keep the numbers between 1 and 10. You can also ask the audience for these. One character who can only say 1 word lines is normally fun to watch.
### How to Play

**One-Syllable Words**

A scene is performed from any prompt, in which performers can only speak in one-syllable words. If they fail, the compere buzzes them out, and another performer replaces them.

**Tips**

Remember, lines of dialogue can be more than one word long – it’s just that every word must be one syllable!

### Questions Only

Two performers start a scene from any prompt. However, they can only speak in questions; if they say something other than a question, or take too long to respond, the compere sounds the buzzer and the performer is replaced by another one.

**Variants**

*Questionable Impressions*, in which the performers adopt a new compere-decided character impression each time they enter; *Questions With Wigs*, where the performers must wear a new wig or other prop with each entry, and act accordingly.

### Song Titles

A scene begins from any prompt, in which all the lines of dialogue must be song titles. If a performer says a line which isn’t a song title, another performer can buzz them off and replace them.

**Variants**

You can relax the rules, to allow dialogue to consist of any song lyrics.
How to Play
A scene begins from any prompt, in which at any given time one of the performers must be standing up; one must be sitting; and one must be lying down.

Tips
If one performer switches position, the one whose position has been switched to must now find a justification to switch to another position – which may have a knock-on effect. Not every transition needs a complex justification, though.

Variants
Make up your own three poses, or increase the number! Bending or kneeling are often used too.
SCRIPT GAMES

In these games, some elements of the scene are pre-scripted. Just like the above, this pre-scripted dialogue provides the improvisors with a constraint which can both challenge and inspire them. However, they do mostly require a little more set-up, to provide the dialogue required!

How to Play
Two performers start a scene from any prompt. One of the two performers can only use dialogue from a random page of a script or screenplay – they must choose one character in the script and say sequential lines of their dialogue whenever it’s their turn to speak.

Tips
As the restricted player, find creative ways to deliver your lines. Inject plenty of emotion. As the non-restricted player, try equally to support and be guided by the direction the script seems to be going in, and make big offers/demands which end up getting subverted, or paying off with lucky return lines.

Variants
Nowadays, this game can be more entertainingly played by using sequential messages from an audience member or performer’s phone!

How to Play
Two performers and an audience member perform a scene from any prompt. The audience member has a series of lines of dialogue on flashcards, which they read when prompted.

Tips
This game can be combined with Playbook, where the audience member is reading from a script. You can also get the audience to supply all the dialogue lines on paper in advance.
**How to Play**

The audience provide four lines of dialogue. Two of the performers are assigned two of these lines each; this is all they can say in the scene. The scene then begins from any prompt, with only the third performer being able to speak freely.

**Tips**

The unrestricted performer should do whatever they can to set up the fixed lines of dialogue to make sense. The restricted performers can experiment with different emotions and emphasized words in their lines, to make them as versatile as possible.

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**How to Play**

The audience provide lots of lines of dialogue, written on slips of paper, in advance. These are either scattered on the stage or given to performers to hold. A scene begins from any prompt. During the scene, performers can pull up and read the written lines of dialogue at any time.

**Tips**

Performers should only look at the slips as they read them; even a few seconds of preparation, or an attempt to set up the line, ruins the fun for the audience. Performers can then try to justify the line after it’s said. But you’ll find the lines make some kind of obvious sense uncannily often…
CHARACTER GAMES
These games use gimmicks which require improvisors to develop interesting characters or emotions. These can often feel similar to constraint-based games, but with rules that specifically make demands of the improvisor’s acting skills. This makes them fantastic for beginners working on characterisation, or anyone that finds they’re not developing interesting or distinctive characters over the course of their scenes.

ANIMALS

How to Play
The compere takes suggestions of animals from the audience, and assigns an animal to each performer, as well as taking another prompt to start the scene. In the subsequent scene, performers must act like their assigned animals.

Tips
Don’t try to be too literal in depicting your assigned animal – you can remain fundamentally humanoid. Create the sense of the chosen animal’s psychology as much as their physicality. Aim for a mashup of children’s genre and adult soap opera themes.

CHANGING EMOTIONS

How to Play
Three performers start a scene from any prompt, relying on a prop. Whoever holds the prop at a given moment has to express an emotion which has been given by the audience in advance. The prop can be passed round as much as you like, causing the emotion to be passed back and forth with it! Multiple props, each with a different emotion, can be used.

Tips
As you can control where the props are, you can use them between you to make the emotional dynamics progress logically – or trip each other up by forcing each other to justify unexpected emotional shifts. Be sure to play each emotion to the hilt.
# How to Play

## COUPLES

**Performers**: 2

**Prompt**: Character pairs

**Props**: 

**Difficulty**: ★★★★☆

**How to Play**

Two performers play a scene impersonating two audience-suggested characters, real or fictional, that make a bizarre pairing. This pair of characters can change through the scene, with more audience input.

**Tips**

Make sure to choose characters that the performers are comfortable playing. It works well to draw each other into the (real or fictional) worlds that the characters come from, to increase the strangeness of the juxtaposition or find interesting things for these characters to do in unusual situations.

## MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES

**Performers**: 3

**Prompt**: Character traits

**Props**: Any handheld items

**Difficulty**: ★★★☆☆

**How to Play**

Three performers begin a scene using three props. Each prop is assigned a character trait or famous character. While holding the prop, the performer must behave like that character.

**Tips**

While switching personalities, ensure that you’re the same character, with consistent goals for the scene – you can try justifying the personality change if able. You can hand multiple props to a single performer, forcing them to try and enact multiple characters together!

## OLD JOB, NEW JOB

**Performers**: 2+

**Prompt**: Professions

**Props**: 

**Difficulty**: ★★★☆☆

**How to Play**

One or two performers are assigned both a current profession and an old profession. They perform a scene in which they carry out work in their current job, in the style of their old job. Another performer may also be useful to interact with them as a client or customer.

**Tips**

Choose very different professions! This is a great way to develop original characters, simply by placing character archetypes in very new settings.
How to Play
The audience suggest a crisis that only a superhero could solve. One performer enters, and is given a superhero name by the audience. They demonstrate their powers, but prove unable to solve the crisis. Another three performers enter in turn, each getting a name, using their powers, but proving unable to solve the crisis, until at the end they find a way to band together and save the day.

Tips
If a suggested superhero name doesn’t lend itself to particular powers, make them up. As the game goes along, the audience will cotton on and give names that are highly suggestive of certain powers.

Variants
In the original, it was each performer in turn who would give the name to the next superhero to enter; only the first superhero name was given by the audience.
LISTENING GAMES

In these games, improvisors are required to pay exceptionally close attention, either to some prompt material or to each other, in order to contribute to the scene. As long as they can do this, these scenes will be sure-fire hits, as the audience is always impressed simply by your ability to remember material and then call back to it a little later.

How to Play

Two performers act out a short scene. The other two watch while wearing headphones. The observing pair must then recreate the scene, creating their own dialogue to match the actions they saw.

Tips

As the first pair, use exaggerated gestures and movements to give the second pair plenty to work with. But don’t go on too long! As the second pair, if you think you know what the scene is about, make sure you perform something as far as possible away from the truth! Make sure you agree in advance who will be replacing who, so you can each focus on one performer.

How to Play

A scene from an old but obscure film is played on a screen, without sound. The performers watch and provide dialogue and sound effects for the onscreen characters.

Tips

Dialogue that subverts what’s taking place on screen, or wild anachronisms, are reliably funny.
**FILM REVIEW**

**How to Play**
One performer plays a film critic, commenting on a film with an audience-suggested title. This involves describing scenes which the other performers recreate, which the film critic can further comment on before moving onto another scene.

**Tips**
As the critic, set up scenes vaguely and allow performers to take them in the direction they want. Make vague but big promises about what the scene will contain: for example, “This death scene is one of the most unexpected in cinematic history…”

**Variants**
This was also often played as a musical.

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**LIVING SCENERY**

**How to Play**
Two performers begin a scene set in an audience-suggested location. As they do so, they refer to features of the scene or props that the other performers must run on and play.

**Tips**
This is a good beginner game for introducing chivalry and listening skills. More advanced performers can challenge the living scenery with impossible-seeming suggestions – living scenery can also create things as pairs. This works with very large numbers of players, with lots of living scenery that remains in place for the whole scene.
How to Play
Two performers play Frankenstein and Igor, who are building two monsters out of corpses. They take suggestions from the audience for real/fictional characters, character archetypes, or animals, to make the monsters’ head, arms, and legs. Once complete, the two monsters come to life and interact with the other characters, trying to portray how each body part exhibits the traits of its source!

Tips
The key here is to get a wide variety of mismatched inputs for each monster. You can vary which parts of the body get endowed, but more than four is hard to keep track of, for monsters and audience alike.

How to Play
Performers start a scene from any audience prompt. Background music with a changing strong emotion or genre plays during the scene. The performers must adapt the tone of the scene to fit the music all the way through.

Tips
Playing music that contradicts the direction of the scene forces funny justifications from the performers. The musician can also support good scene work by picking gradually more dramatic and emotive music. Music genres can be suggested by the audience, if your musician is good enough. If you don’t have a musician, the compere may be able to play tracks with different emotional beats, though this won’t flow as well.
How to Play
The audience provide an everyday problem to solve. Two performers start a scene where they try to solve the problem, and decide to call on Charlie to fix it. They go on to describe all of Charlie’s weird traits. Then, the third performer enters as Charlie, demonstrating all these traits at once while solving the problem.

Tips
The fun in this scene comes totally from Charlie being able to listen and echo all the traits that are mentioned, so a great way to teach the importance of listening to offers! Stay away from describing physical traits and mannerisms that could be seen as offensive, such as a physical impairment or stutter.
CO-OPERATION GAMES

In these games, improvisers have to work together so closely that they’re almost reading each other’s minds. Of course, we’re improvisers, so the way we co-operate is by refusing to co-operate, to make each other’s lives as hard as possible.

DEAD BODIES

Performers 3+
Prompt Any
Props
Difficulty ⭐️⭐️⭐️

How to Play
Three or more performers begin a scene from any prompt. Over its course, all but one performer drops dead. The surviving performer must continue the scene pretending that everything’s normal, physically moving the dead bodies and saying their lines for them.

Tips
Dead performers should be floppy, but hold poses that they’re put in after they’re let go (e.g. standing or sitting). They may collapse to the ground again after a while of not being moved, though.

DUBBING

Performers 4
Prompt Any
Props
Difficulty ⭐️⭐️⭐️⭐️⭐️

How to Play
Two performers mime a scene onstage from any prompt, including moving their mouths for silent dialogue. Each mime is paired with an offstage speaking performer, who provides their dialogue simultaneously.

Tips
This is a more challenging version of Foreign Film Dub, as the pairs of performers must work simultaneously. Each mime/speaker pair should aim to control the character equally; one shouldn’t feel like they’re always following the other’s lead. The speaker often has chances to subvert the mime’s clear intentions for the scene for comic effect – but don’t do this too much!
**How to Play**

One performer is an expert from an audience-suggested country in an audience-suggested absurd topic. Another performer interviews them, only for them to reply in a foreign language. A third performer translates the gibberish.

**Tips**

Imitating a foreign language is in danger of leading to offensive stereotypes – today, this game is more commonly played with gibberish (with the optional story that the expert is in fact an alien). The expert should add either obvious or meaningless gestures to their speech to help the translator; the translator can have fun reinterpreting the expert’s apparent gestures.

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**How to Play**

Two performers begin a scene, from any prompt, in a gibberish version of an audience-suggested foreign language. Two more performers act as interpreters on each side of the stage; after each line, they translate it into English. The performers are paired up, such that one offstage performer always provides a translation for one of the two onstage performers.

**Tips**

This is an easier version of Dubbing, as the interpreters have time to come up with a translation after watching the entire line, with actions. The speaker often has chances to subvert the stage performer’s clear intentions for the scene for comic effect – but don’t do this too much! As in Expert Translation, doing impersonations of foreign languages can today be seen as offensive, so this game can be performed instead using an ‘alien’ language of pure gibberish.
How to Play
Two pairs of performers team up to play a character. One performer in each pair keeps their arms by their sides, while the other stands directly behind and puts their arms under the first’s armpits – becoming the arms for the first person. They perform a scene like this, based on any prompt.

Tips
Ensure that the scene calls for lots of physical movement – by requesting a high-activity profession, for example!

Variants
The person providing the hands can wear a blindfold, requiring the front person to verbally describe what they’re doing.

How to Play
The performers in this scene, which begins from any prompt, can’t move on their own; instead, two audience volunteers must move their bodies for them.

Tips
Performers must be floppy but hold any stance they’re placed in. You can add extra conventions to make it easier: a tap on the back of the legs means “step forward”, for example. Performers can either carry on the scene as if they’re moving around freely, hinting how they should be moving, or try to justify the strange movements they’re being made to do.
**How to Play**

Two performers begin a scene from any prompt. Another two performers, to each side of the stage, provide all the sound effects for them. They are paired up, so that each offstage performer provides the sound effects for one of the onstage performers. If possible, the offstage performers can use microphones.

**Tips**

Onstage performers should make sure to use lots of actions and physicality which have associated sounds. Sound effect makers can add environmental sound too, to bring the scene to life.

**Variants**

The onstage performers can be restricted to no dialogue either – but unlike in Dubbing, the offstage performers can only murmur to represent the onstage performers’ speech, leading to a scene that’s essentially non-verbal.

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**How to Play**

The audience provide a stupid-sounding field of expertise. A scene takes place consisting of an interviewer, who poses questions to an expert in this field. Each of these characters is played by a pair of performers, standing or sitting as closely as possible to each other. The expert pair can only speak one word at a time, while the interviewer pair must speak all their words in unison.

**Tips**

The skills of speaking in alternating words and speaking in unison are different, but both can start slow but build to impressive speeds once the performers have learned to relax and share the direction of the dialogue.

**Variants**

For an easier version, the interviewer can just be a single person. In this variant, the interviewer can also field questions from the audience. Or, the single interviewer can interview two experts, in a debate format.
In these games, one performer (the guesser) is kept in the dark about what’s going on – most commonly, because they’ll leave the performance area while the audience provide the scene prompts. They’ll then find themselves having to play a starring role in proceedings – a kind of real life Actor’s Nightmare. Their challenge is to guess some critical piece of information, while being helped or hindered by their fellow performers. The scene ends when they successfully guess what’s going on.

These games bring a truly game-like element to a repertoire. However, all performers, especially the guesser, should remember that the primary objective of these games is to create an entertaining scene – successfully guessing is much less important! It’s not a competition to try and guess quickly, but nor is it fun if the guesser takes too long – so as you practise these games, work together to find an entertaining balance.

**How to Play**

One performer leaves the stage, while another three get assigned unusual items or activities to be addicted to by the audience. The guessing performer returns, to play the host of an AA-style meeting. The host asks the others questions about their condition and offers them all sympathy and advice. In the meantime, they must try to figure out what each other performer’s addiction is. If they guess successfully, that performer leaves the meeting.

**Tips**

This game may be seen as offensive – you may want to play a similar game such as *Blind Date* instead!

**Variants**

This wasn’t originally a guessing game – the addictions just formed the prompt for a normal narrative scene around a meeting. All performers suffered from the same addiction.
How to Play
Two performers play police detectives. The third is a suspect they’re interrogating. The suspect leaves the performance area while the audience provide the crime committed, the way it was committed, and the crime’s victim. The suspect then has to answer the interrogation questions from the police detectives as best they can, while working out the details of their crime. Once they know a given detail of the crime, they confess to it. The game ends when they’ve confessed to the entire crime in lurid detail.

Tips
The interrogators should ask open-ended questions, and the suspect answer them in plenty of detail, for comic value. As the game goes on, the interrogators should throw out more clues, in the form of more specific questions or puns, until the suspect works it out. To make this easier, you can agree in advance to discuss each detail of the crime in the specified order, only moving onto the next detail once the suspect has worked out what it is.

How to Play
A game in the style of the UK dating show Blind Date, or the US show The Dating Game. One performer is the ‘chooser’ contestant, who is selecting someone to date from three competing contestants who are hidden from their view. Before the scene starts, the chooser leaves the performance area while the competing contestants each get a character quirk from the audience. During the scene, the chooser asks each contestant questions, ostensibly to help them decide which one to date, but in reality as opportunities for the contestants to provide clues as to their character quirk. If the chooser guesses a quirk correctly, that contestant walks away. The game ends when the chooser guesses the last quirk, selects that contestant for a date, and they leave happily together.

Tips
When you answer, drop increasingly unsubtle hints as to your character quirk. In adult groups, you can add innuendos galore.
**NEWSFLASH**

**How to Play**

One performer plays a field reporter, standing in front of a video clip. They can’t see the clip being played, but must report on the scene behind them as it unfolds. Two other performers play anchormen in a studio, who can see the clip and ask the reporter questions about it. The game ends when the reporter successfully describes exactly what is being shown on the screen behind them, while remaining in character.

**Tips**

The comedy comes from the anchormen asking broad questions, and the reporter giving specific but wildly guessed answers about the subject of the clip. As the scene continues, the anchormen should start asking more specific questions, or using wordplay to help the reporter guess what’s on the screen.

**PARTY QUIRKS**

**How to Play**

The guesser plays the role of host at a party. They leave the performance space, while each guest is given a quirk, commonly in the categories of: weird job, fear, love, or well-known historical, fictional, or celebrity figure. The guests arrive one by one and chat to the host, throwing out clues to their identity. They leave when the host successfully guesses their quirk.

**Tips**

Guests should become less and less subtle in how they exhibit their quirk. They or other guests can also use wordplay to help the guesser. Don’t forget to include an actual story too – not all the dialogue and interactions need to revolve around the host trying to guess each quirk.
How to Play
The audience suggest a celebrity figure, and some kind of newsworthy (often scandalous) event that they’ve been recently involved in. The guesser hears which celebrity they are, but is out of the room while the event is decided. The guesser must then field questions about the event from a panel of journalists, played by the other performers. The game ends when the celebrity is able to successfully describe the event in detail.

Tips
The press should ask open-ended questions, and the celebrity answer them in plenty of detail, for comic value. As the game goes on, the press should throw out more clues, in the form of more specific questions or puns, until the celebrity works it out.

Variants
You can keep the celebrity identity secret from the guesser as well, and require them to guess this first.
**PASTICHE GAMES**

These games take their inspiration from some well-known entertainment format, be that a TV show, commercial, or sports event. Some of them have the basic structure of a narrative scene, and aim to pastiche a particular genre. Others may take totally different formats which make a fun change from narrative-based improv.

What’s great about these is that everyone will know, and find it easy to parody, the source material, which provides a great crutch to ensure the scene remains lively and moving in the right direction.

**AWARD SHOW**

**How to Play**

One or two performers present an award show for an audience-suggested ridiculous achievement. One or more other performers then come and accept the award, making an acceptance speech.

**Tips**

Play strong, over the top celebrity personas in all roles.

**EXPLANATIONS**

**How to Play**

Two performers explain an audience-suggested complex but real topic in a challenging style. For example, they might be challenged to explain quantum physics in the style of a conspiracy theorist.

**Tips**

Don’t worry about being accurate!
How to Play
One performer is an expert in an audience-suggested absurd topic. The other interviews them in an audience-suggested style – which could be a character stereotype or specific character impression.

Tips
You can also take audience suggestions for questions, or challenge the expert to recite a poem/sing a song about their topic.

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How to Play
2-3 performers play models walking down a fashion show catwalk. The fashion show is themed around an audience-suggested profession or other topic. 1-2 performers comment on the show in the style of fashion experts.

Tips
The models should act absurdly, and make big physical offers, while the commentators take everything seriously, and interpret what is happening.

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How to Play
A film noir style scene is performed, set in a mismatched audience-suggested location. Each performer periodically turns to address the audience with some narration or internal monologue.

Tips
Audience-directed monologues can subvert the apparent action and intentions of the characters. Be sure to play over-the-top film noir characters, with golden age Hollywood American accents, too.
**FILM TRAILER**

**How to Play**
The audience provide a film genre and title. Two or three performers perform a series of short dramatic scenes taken from that film, while another performer provides a dramatic trailer-style voiceover.

**Tips**
Just like in *Film Critic*, the voiceover can also contain offers for what scene is shown next, or unexpected interpretations of the scene we’ve just watched.

**Hey, You Down There!**

**How to Play**
Two performers perform a silent scene in the style of a 50s public information film, on an audience-chosen subject. A third performer provides 50s style narration.

**Tips**
The narrator can either force the performers to depict challenging things, or subvert what they’re trying to depict with a different interpretation.

**If You Know What I Mean**

**How to Play**
A scene is performed based on an audience-suggested topic. The performers drop as many topic-related innuendos into the scene as possible, followed by the phrase ‘If you know what I mean’.

**Tips**
Adults Only! This game is best played by groups who can parody the bawdy style of *Carry On* films or *Are You Being Served?*. 
**How to Play**
Two performers present a useless object to the audience, singing its many praises in the style of an infomercial. The audience can suggest useless objects, or even provide real props from their possessions.

**Tips**
The comedy comes from parodying infomercial tropes, such as overenthusiastic sales pitches and demos, plus sale offers and combination deals. This is a great game for total beginners, to teach the ‘yes, and’ principle: you can specify that each presenter says “Yes, and...” before adding extra information about the object.

| Performers | 2 |
| Prompt     | Objects, real or imaginary |
| Props      | Any handheld items |
| Difficulty | ★ |

**MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE**

| Performers | 3+ |
| Prompt     | Mundane activity |
| Props      | Any handheld items |
| Difficulty | ★★ |

**How to Play**
The audience provides a mundane task suggestion. One performer provides a Mission Impossible-style briefing on the mundane task. Two to three performers listen, and then carry out the task in the style of secret agents.

**Tips**
Use lots of physicality and little dialogue. Perform every bit of the task in needlessly action-packed, violent, and difficult ways, coming close to death as many times as possible.

| Performers | 4+ |
| Prompt     | Real movie |
| Props      | Any handheld items |
| Difficulty | ★★ ★★ |

**How to Play**
The audience suggests a well-known movie. Performers step forward to perform short scenes that might have been cut from that movie.

**Tips**
This can be supported by a compere, setting up particular scenes, if needed. The movie has to be incredibly well known, to ensure all the performers know it!
**How to Play**

The audience suggests a mundane daily activity. Two performers perform this activity as if it were an Olympic sport, in slow motion, with deadly seriousness and focus. The other two performers provide commentary.

**Tips**

The athletes can begin with warmups and psyching up as well. They can interact, as if it were a contact sport, or remain separate; they can be on the same team or playing against each other. One might ‘win’ and the other ‘lose’ by the end of the scene. The commentators can be challenged to provide commentary in the style of a particular sport – see how golf commentary differs from football!

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**How to Play**

The audience suggest a ridiculous charitable cause to host a telethon for. Two performers act like telethon hosts, justifying why this cause needs money and imploring the audience for support. Other performers can enter when prompted, to provide celebrity endorsements, testimonies, or sob stories.

**Tips**

The hosts here act like comperes, setting up funny scenes or characters to appear, or forcing existing characters to do ridiculous things.
How to Play

The audience provide four weird character traits, and a catchy news headline. Performer play an anchor, co-anchor, sports presenter, and weather presenter (or other newsroom roles) and present this news story, each with an assigned weird character trait.

Tips

Interpersonal stories or narratives can often break out as the story is presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prompt</td>
<td>Character traits, news headline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Props</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>⭐⭐⭐</td>
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MEDIUM FORM GAMES

These games are open-ended, rely much less on gimmicks, and tend to run on for longer than other games in this collection. Typically, the prompts will allow scenes to go in a wide variety of directions, with more substantial narrative arcs. They’re therefore great for showing an improv class that they don’t need gimmicks to create entertaining improv, and for transitioning into longform.

How to Play
The audience suggests a criminal case to be the subject of a trial. Performers play the judge, prosecutor, defendant, and witnesses in a series of cross-examinations. The scene can end with a jury verdict, or be taken in some totally different direction.

Tips
This can be extended into a medium-form story of 20 minutes or more. As a flexible and open-ended game without strong gimmicks, it’s good preparation for long-form. The judge plays a kind of compere role, introducing characters, setting up scenes, and occasionally interjecting. The prosecutor is the most important role, as the game revolves mainly around dialogue between them and the defendant or witnesses they call.

How to Play
One performer plays a Jeremy Kyle-style talk show host, presiding over a feud between the characters of an audience-suggested fairytale. These characters are introduced, given a chance to explain their issues, and then asked questions by the host, leading to onstage spats between them. Other performers can play audience members, asking more questions or getting involved.

Tips
Performers can draw on source material, but also not be afraid to introduce new ideas that aren’t found in the originals!
**FUNERAL**

How to Play
The audience suggests the name, occupation, and hobby for a deceased person. Four or more performers depict the funeral of that person, playing the priest and relatives of the deceased, and give eulogies that reveal the freak accident that killed them. These monologues can extend into interaction between the characters, and a more complex narrative arc developing within the scene.

Variants
You can wrap this scene up by collectively singing an elegy.

**MEET THE PARENTS**

How to Play
Two performers play a newly engaged couple. Another two play a set of parents, who are meeting their child’s fiancée for the first time. The audience provide character quirks for both parents.

Tips
The quirky parents can introduce the fiancée to any aspect of their house and lives, to draw the quirks out. Other tropes of this scenario, such as an overprotective mother or hostile father, can be used too.

Variants
This can be played as a guessing game, where the fiancée doesn’t know what quirks the parents have and need to figure them out for the scene to end.
How to Play
The audience provide a fairytale story to be the subject of a news report. Performers play the anchorman; an expert for the anchorman to interview; a reporter live at the scene; and witnesses for the reporter to interview. You can stick to this simple interview structure, switching between newsroom and field settings, or develop it into any direction that seems to work.

Tips
Contrast the serious newsroom tropes with fairytale characters.

How to Play
The audience submit detailed written scene ideas in advance, which go into a hat. The compere draws and reads these, and any performers may enter to perform that scene.

Tips
Performers may feel inspire to follow on one scene with another, connected one, rather than returning to the hat for inspiration. Or, they could start a scene from a hat that turns out to be somehow connected to previous scenes, building up a loose Harold-style narrative over the course of several scenes.
How to Play
A scene is performed from any prompt which quickly leads to the reveal of an embarrassing object which one character has been trying to keep secret. The object is a prop supplied by the audience, which the secret-keeper doesn’t see in advance. The scene continues to play out, with the characters dealing with the consequences of the secret being revealed.

Tips
The comedy comes from the secret-keeper to desperately avoid revealing the secret, while everyone knows that they themselves don’t know what the secret is. They must then justify why the probably mundane object was so embarrassing to them.

Variants
The secret needn’t be a prop at all – it could just be an idea written down by an audience member, and given to the relevant character to read when the critical moment comes.

How to Play
The audience provide a story title and moral for a story. One performer begins narrating this story. The others act out scenes from this story when prompted by the narrator. The story switches between acted scenes and narrative inserts, until it ends by demonstrating its moral.

Tips
The narrator and performers should feel they contribute equally to the overall story, by passing focus back and forth between them. Keep both elements short.
How to Play
The audience provide three famous characters (either real or fictional) who are mismatched, unlikely to get along, or even ever meet. A sitcom-style scene is shown about the three of them living together, having to solve an audience-suggested domestic problem.

How to Play
The audience provide an unusual theme for a restaurant. Two performers play restaurant customers, while another two act as waiters or other staff, playing off the theme. While the two customers develop their story, the waiters bring out successive courses or increasingly elaborate thematic performances.

Tips
Make sure the scene still has a narrative arc, rather than just relying on waiters acting strangely!
MUSICAL GAMES

Musical improv is, in most people’s opinion, the most challenging form there is. These games may involve simply singing a song straight to the audience, performing a song-based scene, or performing a musical-style scene that incorporates singing breaks. Almost all these games require a talented pianist who can improvise backing music around simple chord progressions, as well of course as a piano, so they’re not the easiest to incorporate into your repertoire. But if you can, then you’ll blow your audience away every time!

A few games highlighted here are actually very simple, in terms of both technical requirements and improv level. Showing beginners that they can improvise whole songs can be extremely empowering.

How to Play
Two pairs of performers sing a song suggested by the audience, while impersonating a famous duo. Each pair works together to play one member of the duo, and must sing in unison, as if with one voice!

Tips
Make sure you’re experts at speaking in one voice before you attempt this new challenge.

How to Play
A scene starts from any audience prompt, in the style of a Broadway musical. Whenever the pianist begins an opening melody, the current speaker must break into a musical number.

Tips
Use Broadway musical tropes in your character and story decisions to really capture the theme.

**ALL IN ONE VOICE**

| Performers | Pianist, 4 |
| Prompt     | Song title, characters |
| Props      | Keyboard |
| Difficulty | ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ |

**AMERICAN MUSICAL**

| Performers | Pianist, 2 |
| Prompt     | Any |
| Props      | Keyboard |
| Difficulty | ⭐⭐⭐⭐ |
**How to Play**
Performers enter a bar one at a time, and sing about their audience-suggested problems to a bartender, who then sings the solution back to them to the same tune.

**Tips**
This is a good entry-level singing game; performers can stick to an easy blues structure to make the singing aspect easier. The other performer can hum a blues progression, to eliminate the need for a musician.

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**How to Play**
All performers line up and play a doo-wop group, singing about a tragic accidental death. The audience gives the name of the victim, and the hobby that led to the victim’s death.

**Tips**
The victim’s name provides a great source of rhymes, plus words related to the hobby. Stay as cheery as possible while describing escalating improbable calamities.

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**How to Play**
An audience member is invited on stage to give a few details of themselves. Two performers then sing a duet incorporating as much of this information as possible.

**Tips**
To make this easier, you can add a little structure to the suggestions and song – planning, for example, that the first verse will be about the audience member’s job, the second about their hobby, and the chorus about their future plans. You may like to keep the audience member onstage to have the song sung at them!
**How to Play**

One or two performers advertise a Greatest Hits CD, which is a collection of songs about an audience-suggested topic. After describing a particular song, which may include its title, genre, or singer, another two performers must perform a brief snippet from it.

**Tips**

The advertisers can challenge the singers as far as they want, while describing what songs they have to sing. The songs don’t have to be very long, making this a good introductory game to musical improv.

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**Hoedown**

Performers line up and sing a hoedown-style song about an audience-chosen subject. Each performer sings one four-line verse, with an AABB rhyme scheme.

**Tips**

To generate impressive rhymes, think of a subject-related word you could end a line on, then think of a rhyming word. Put the second word you thought of first, so you can end impressively on the relevant word.

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**Irish Drinking Song**

Performers line up and sing an Irish drinking song about an audience-suggested topic. Each performer sings one line of an 8-line verse with the following rhyme scheme: ABCB DEFE. At the end of a verse, everyone sings “A hi-dee-hi-dee-hi-dee! A hi-dee-hi-dee-hi-dee!” Four verses are sung in total.

**Tips**

This song has a set tune and structure which is best seen to be understood. It’s fast paced with lots of switchovers, making it extremely challenging. However, only the fourth and eight singers in a given verse need to worry about finding a rhyme.
**How to Play**

The audience provide a profession, and three performers perform a Motown-style song called ‘Do the [profession]’. Each verse can focus on one particular aspect of the profession; as one performer sings, the others devise related dance moves.

**How to Play**

An audience member is brought on to provide details of their lives (profession, hobbies, recent events, etc.) The performers then perform an opera about their lives, in which all dialogue must be sung. They may also break out into arias.

**Tips**

Opera can be very free-form, without the pressure of sticking to a verse structure or rhyme scheme. Often, these songs will feel more like spoken scenes, as a narrative needs to unfold, and the characters interact with one another through song. Make sure to overdramatize mundane details, and pack scenes full of overblown emotions.

**How to Play**

This is identical to Bartender in structure. One performer plays a prison visitor. The others play a sequence of prisoners, who hold up bars in front of their face and sing about their audience-suggested crimes in a blues style. The visitor replies to each in turn – they could suggest how they can reform, or just provide another perspective on the crime.

**Tips**

This is a good entry-level singing game; performers can stick to an easy blues structure to make the singing aspect easier. This can be hummed by other performers, to remove the need for a musician.
How to Play
One performer plays a psychiatrist. The others play a sequence of clients, who sit on the psychiatrist’s couch and sing about their audience-suggested problems. The visitor replies to each in turn.

Tips
This is a good entry-level singing game, and can be performed just like Bartender and Prison Visitor.

How to Play
The audience suggests a topic. Performers line up and deliver a rap verse in turn about the topic, over a beatboxer. The verses can have a flexible structure and rhyme scheme, though a four-line ABAB is most common.

Tips
The line of dialogue often works well as a refrain or chorus to the song.

How to Play
A scene begins from any prompt. The compere may press a buzzer after any line of dialogue, whereupon the musician plays some opening chords and the speaker must improvise a short Broadway-style song based on that line of dialogue. This happens several times during the scene.

Tips
The line of dialogue often works well as a refrain or chorus to the song.
How to Play
Performers make up a song about an audience member, or a topic from the audience, in a style given by the compere or audience. Normally, two performers will sing a verse each. Then, one performer will sing a chorus, and they'll both repeat it back.

Variants
Two performers can make up a song about the same thing, in different styles.

How to Play
The audience suggest two famous characters (either real or fictional) who’d make unlikely flatmates. Two performers then sing a song about this pair, in the style of a sitcom theme song. The other two play short mimed high-energy scenes as this couple, again in the style of opening credits.

Tips
The onstage performers can act out what’s just been sung about, or vice versa. The singers can end by setting and then repeating a simple refrain – normally the names of the characters and then a line that rhymes with that.
Finally, we present to you a choice selection of games which you probably shouldn’t bother trying to play, as they all involve the kind of setup that only a team of TV production monkeys can provide.

### PICTURE

**How to Play**

This game requires a giant picture of some lifesize characters with their faces cut out, like you get for tourists to pose with at tourist attractions. A scene from any prompt is performed by performers whose heads are stuck through these holes throughout.

| Performers | 2 |
| Prompt     | Any |
| Props      | Lifesize picture |
| Difficulty | ⭐️⭐️ |

### SIDEWAYS SCENE

**How to Play**

A scene begins from any prompt, in which all the performers are lying on the floor. A camera relays them to a live screen, making seem as if they’re standing up.

**Tips**

You have better things to do than play this game.

| Performers | 2+ |
| Prompt     | Any |
| Props      | Camera with live feed to lifesize screen |
| Difficulty | ⭐️⭐️⭐️⭐️ |

### MOUSETRAPES

**How to Play**

The stage is covered with primed old-fashioned mousetraps. Two performers begin a scene from any prompt, while blindfolded and barefoot. They must do their best to continue the scene without reacting to the triggered mousetraps.

**Tips**

OK, you probably could play this game if you really wanted to. We still advise against it.

| Performers | 2 |
| Prompt     | Any |
| Props      | Dozens of live mousetraps |
| Difficulty | ⭐️⭐️⭐️⭐️⭐️⭐️ |
AND...SCENE!

Thanks for reading to the bitter end! We hope you enjoy bringing these 92 games and their many variants to your next workshop or show.

In case you’ve been wondering who we are... Hivemind was formed in 2016 by a group of improvisers freshly graduated from the Cambridge Impronauts. Since then, we’ve become part of London’s vibrant improv scene. As of 2019, we’re resident at the Museum of Comedy with two shows – Lord of the Game of the Ring of Thrones, a fantasy epic, and Improvengers: Pretendgame, a superhero blockbuster.

We also offer free improv workshops in central London, where we play all these kinds of games and more. We can be booked for private event entertainment, and we offer corporate training packages, using these games and exercises to inspire work teams.

If any of that sounds interesting to you, by all means find out more at www.hivemindimprov.com, or drop us a line: hello@hivemindimprov.com! You can also reach out to use on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @hivemindimprov.

Have fun!