



Fishbowl

Get your team to guess the same bowl of words three times over — first by describing, then with a single word, then by acting.

Players 4–20 (best with 6–12)

Play time 25–45 min

Materials Paper and pen

Movement Standing optional

QUICK RULES

1. Everyone writes three words or names on slips; all the slips go into one bowl.
2. Round one — describe the slip without saying it. One minute per turn, teams alternating.
3. Round two — the same slips, but only one word as the clue.
4. Round three — the same slips again, acted in silence.
5. A point for every slip guessed; the highest total after three rounds wins.

SET UP

1. Split into two teams and seat them alternately if you can, so that turns pass naturally round the room.
2. Hand out three slips per player. Everyone writes one thing on each — a person, place, object or phrase the whole room would know — and folds it into the bowl.
3. Set a one-minute timer and choose which team starts.

HOW TO PLAY

1. On a turn, one player draws slips one at a time and gives clues to their own team until the minute ends.
2. Each slip guessed is kept by that team. A slip still in hand when time runs out goes back into the bowl.
3. A clue-giver may pass on one slip per turn; it goes back into the bowl.
4. Teams alternate, with a new clue-giver every turn, until the bowl is empty. Count the slips, note the score and return every slip to the bowl.
5. Round one: say anything except the words on the slip, or parts of them.
6. Round two: say exactly one word as the clue — no gestures and no second attempt.
7. Round three: no sound at all — act it out.

HOW THE GAME ENDS

The game ends when the bowl has been emptied three times. Add up each team's slips from the three rounds; the higher total wins. If time is short, stop after any complete round — the scores still stand.

PLAYING SEATED

Fully playable seated: the clue-giver stays in their chair for all three rounds and, in the acting round, uses only hands, face and upper body. Agree this for everyone, not just for one player.

TIPS FOR THE HOST

- Read through the slips before starting and quietly replace anything only one person could know.
- Remind the room that round one is the memory round — listening while the other team plays pays off later.
- Keep the bowl moving. The clue-giver changes every turn, so nobody sits out for long.
- If the same confident player keeps guessing, ask clue-givers to look at a different teammate each time.

VARIATIONS

Four rounds. Add a final round in which the clue-giver hides behind a sheet or under a blanket and gives the clue with sounds only — no words. By then the room knows the slips so well that a single hum is often enough.

Short bowl. For a twenty-minute game, write two slips each and play rounds one and three only. It is the gentlest way to introduce the game to a family that has never played.

STARTER IDEAS: THINGS

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| ▪ a hot-air balloon | ▪ a sleeping bag |
| ▪ a sandcastle | ▪ a washing machine |
| ▪ a wedding cake | ▪ a paper aeroplane |
| ▪ a treasure map | ▪ a rubber duck |

STARTER IDEAS: MOMENTS

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| ▪ a traffic jam | ▪ a marching band |
| ▪ a lost umbrella | ▪ a picnic in the rain |
| ▪ a roller coaster ride | ▪ a suitcase that will not close |
| ▪ a snowball fight | ▪ the last slice of cake |

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