



Picture Telephone

Pass a sentence round the table, turning it into a drawing and then back into words, and see what survives the journey.

Players 4–10 (best with 5–8)**Play time** 15–30 min**Materials** Paper and pen**Movement** Seated

QUICK RULES

1. Everyone writes a sentence at the top of a sheet and passes it on.
2. The next player draws it, folds the sentence out of sight and passes it on.
3. The next player sees only the drawing and writes what they think it shows.
4. Keep alternating until every sheet is home — then unfold and read aloud.

SET UP

1. Give every player a pen and one sheet of paper, held tall rather than wide.
2. Each player writes one short sentence across the top — something that could be drawn, such as "a cat teaching a yoga class".
3. Agree a time limit for each turn. One minute keeps the drawings quick and the table moving.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Everyone passes their sheet to the left at the same moment.
2. If the last thing on the sheet is a sentence, draw it underneath — no letters or numbers in the drawing.
3. If the last thing on the sheet is a drawing, write underneath what you believe it shows.
4. Before passing, fold the paper back so that only your own contribution can be seen.
5. Keep passing and alternating until each sheet returns to the player who started it.
6. Take turns unfolding a sheet and reading the whole chain aloud, from the first sentence to the last.

HOW THE GAME ENDS

The game ends when every sheet has gone once round the table and been read aloud. There is no score and no winner. If a chain would end on a drawing, its owner writes the final caption before the reveal.

PLAYING SEATED

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

TIPS FOR THE HOST

- Say clearly that bad drawings are the point; the best chains come from honest misunderstandings.
- Keep to the time limit. Long, careful drawings slow the table and make the chains less funny.
- Check the fold each time — one visible earlier line spoils the whole chain.
- With young children, let them draw on every turn and give the writing turns to the adult beside them.

VARIATIONS

One-word start. Begin with a single noun instead of a sentence — "volcano", "dentist", "picnic". Chains drift more slowly, which suits younger players and anyone who is nervous about drawing.

Themed evening. Every opening sentence must fit a theme, such as a family holiday, the season, or the story of how two guests met. Themed chains make good keepsakes — hand each sheet to the person it is about.

STARTER IDEAS: ANIMALS UP TO SOMETHING

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| ▪ a cat teaching a yoga class | ▪ an octopus knitting eight scarves |
| ▪ a giraffe stuck in a lift | ▪ a dog driving the school bus |
| ▪ a penguin delivering pizza | ▪ an elephant hiding behind a lamp post |
| ▪ two snails in a very slow race | ▪ a mouse lifting weights |

STARTER IDEAS: UNLIKELY PEOPLE AND THINGS

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| ▪ grandma winning a skateboard contest | ▪ a pirate who lost his map in the laundry |
| ▪ a dragon afraid of a birthday candle | ▪ a wizard who can only make toast |
| ▪ a snowman on a beach holiday | ▪ a king queuing for ice cream |
| ▪ a robot learning to dance | ▪ the moon wearing sunglasses |

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