

CHARADES

Charades is a game of pantomimes: you have to "act out" a phrase without speaking, while the other members of your team try to guess what the phrase is. The objective is for your team to guess the phrase as quickly as possible.

Equipment

- a stopwatch or other timing device
- a notepad and pencil for scorekeeping
- blank slips of paper
- two baskets or other containers for the slips

Preparation

Divide the players into two teams, preferably of equal size. Divide the slips of paper between the two teams. Select a neutral timekeeper/scorekeeper, or pick members from each team to take turns. Agree on how many rounds to play. Review the gestures and hand signals and invent any others you deem appropriate.

The teams temporarily adjourn to separate rooms, to come up with phrases to put on their pieces of paper. These phrases may either be quotations or titles of books, movies, plays, television shows, and songs. Here are some suggested rules to prevent the phrases from being too hard to guess:

- no team should write down any phrase unless at least three people on the team have heard of it;
- no phrase should be longer than seven words;
- no phrase should consist solely of a proper name (i.e., it should also contain other words);
- no foreign phrases are allowed.

Once they have finished writing their phrases, the teams come back to the same room.

To Play

Each round of the game proceeds as follows:

- A player from Team A draws a phrase slip from Team B's basket. After he/she has had a short time to review the slip, the timekeeper for Team B notes the time and tells the player to start. Team A then has three minutes to guess the phrase. If they figure it out, the timekeeper records how long it took. If they do not figure it out in three minutes, the timekeeper announces that the time is up, and records a time of three minutes.
- A player from Team B draws a phrase slip from Team A's basket, and play proceeds as above.

Normally the game continues until every player has had a chance to "act out" a phrase. The score for each team is the total time that the team needed for all of the rounds. The team with the smallest score wins the game.

Gestures

To act out a phrase, one usually starts by indicating what category the phrase is in, and how many words are in the phrase. From then on, the usual procedure is to act out the words one at a time (although not necessarily in the order that they appear in the phrase). In some cases, however, it may make more sense to try to act out the "entire concept" of the phrase at once.

To Indicate Categories:

- **Book title:** Unfold your hands as if they were a book.
- **Movie title:** Pretend to crank an old-fashioned movie camera.
- **Play title:** Pretend to pull the rope that opens a theater curtain.
- **Song title:** Pretend to sing.
- **TV show:** Draw a rectangle to outline the TV screen.
- **Quote or Phrase:** Make quotation marks in the air with your fingers.

To Indicate Other Things:

- **Number of words in the title:** Hold up the number of fingers.
- **Which word you're working on:** Hold up the number of fingers again.
- **Number of syllables in the word:** Lay the number of fingers on your arm.
- **Which syllable you're working on:** Lay the number of fingers on your arm again.
- **Length of word:** Make a "little" or "big" sign as if you were measuring a fish.
- **"The entire concept:"** sweep your arms through the air.
- **"On the nose"** (i.e., someone has made a correct guess): point at your nose with one hand, while pointing at the person with your other hand.
- **"Sounds like":** Cup one hand behind an ear.
- **"Longer version of :"** Pretend to stretch a piece of elastic.
- **"Shorter version of:"** Do a "karate chop" with your hand
- **"Plural":** link your little fingers.
- **"Past tense":** wave your hand over your shoulder toward your back.
- **A letter of the alphabet:** move your hand in a chopping motion toward your arm (near the top of your forearm if the letter is near the beginning of the alphabet, and near the bottom of your arm if the letter is near the end of the alphabet).

Source: University of Maryland

<http://www.cs.umd.edu/~nau/misc/charades.html>