



TOURNAMENT OF GAMES



I. Gig Economy

The on-demand economy means today's workers may spend more time preparing and waiting for work than actually working. A temporary work situation can be called a gig, though frequently it's not so jazzy.

This game begins with all the players arranging themselves in a grid formation to more easily prepare themselves for what might happen next. Next, they use silent pantomime to define and prepare the terrain of their work—literally the box they find themselves stuck in. The majority of this game is spent miming these home offices. The game takes off when a “gig” appears. A player enthusiastically says “Gig,” drawing the other player's attention to show everyone the kind of work they've set up for themselves: data entry, greeting, packing, taking care of an elder, etc. A gig is fleeting; the other players quickly stop what they are doing and attempt to get the gig by pantomiming that special motion. The gig lasts as long as the players can stand it, before returning to their home-office activity.

Futurists forecast a time when machines will replace all workers; until then, we'll let you figure out how to replicate yourself when two or more gigs appear at once. The challenge here is to go from inactivity to activity at the drop of a hat and be open to the spontaneous challenge of multi-tasking.

2. People Used To Be Paid For This / People Used To Be Enslaved For This

According to Wikipedia, *prāṇāyāma* comes from the Sanskrit words *prāṇa* and *ayāma*. It translates as “life force” and “expansion.” In yoga, *prāṇāyāma* is a practice of specific and often intricate breathing techniques. We consider this game a form of *prāṇāyāma* and hope players will reach a kind of enlightened understanding.

It is played in groups of up to one thousand and begins when everyone lays on their backs in a circle with their heads facing inward. The circle is tight, the circle is settled, and everyone breathes in and out. As the breathing deepens, players begin to synchronize with one another. Once a collective in/out pattern is established, the players begin a vocal meditation. They repeat on the inhale, “People used to be paid for this,” and on the exhale, “People used to be enslaved for this.” The syncopated repetition of the mantra is its own reward, as players improvise patterns and awareness dawns throughout their bodies. They come into self-knowledge about their subject relationship to the planet.

Other versions of this game begin with players standing in a circle holding hands, or in a group hug. In all version of the game, particularly with the group hug, it is a recommended that a box of tissues be on hand to wipe away tears.

3. Containerization Tag

Social scientists and engineers consider the widespread standardization of the shipping container moving from ship to ports to rails to your local Walmart as one of the most transformative technological innovations of the 20th century. Not only has it led to the mechanization of ports and rail yards worldwide, with an attendant transformation of labor, it has affected supply chain management through all levels of agricultural and industrial production. It has driven down the cost of production significantly, made the world smaller, helped to eliminate local markets, and made many old systems redundant. Meanwhile the game of tag—like market friction—is timeless.

In Containerization Tag, a play area is divided into one small section serving as a port, and a larger area is defined as the ocean. Two players hold hands to make a container, while the rest of the players roam about the ocean as undisciplined logistical elements in the market. The game begins when the two players attempt to corral and discipline the free-floating logistical elements by snaring them between their arms. When boxed, the container transports its cargo to port. The cargo (formerly the undisciplined market unit) waits until the container returns with another contained unit. When the container delivers a second shipment to port, the two shipments become a new container in the fleet and set forth to discipline the remaining undisciplined logistical elements. The game is over when the last logistical element is brought to port to be neatly fit into the supply chain. A new game begins with the final pair of logistical elements becoming the first container.

This game can also be played as Ship, Container, and Wobbly Tag, in which a member of Industrial Workers of the World is identified amongst the seamen. This radical agent alone has the power to nab a single containered sailor waiting idle at the port, and turn them back into an independent sailor enjoying the anarchic life of the seas for as long as they can hold out.

4. The Great Transformer: The Impact of the Internet on Economic Growth and Prosperity

Be warned: This game is rough. There are winners and losers, so don't play if you are a loser or can't get hurt. But, oddly, this game starts with a hug, a real long one, in which the group gets tight with one another. When everyone is nice and comfortable, they speak the phrase, “The great transformer: The impact of the Internet on economic growth and prosperity.” While doing this, they let go of each other and gently push on their neighbors. Those left standing at the end of this game are the winners of this round. After several rounds of play, you may find that you and another person are consistently the ones left on the ground. At this point, you may decide to form an alliance to gang up against other folks, or conversely, if you're a winner, find other winners and develop ways to remain on top during the market shake-up.

5. \$Earthball*

The \$Earthball is the Pied Piper of New New Games. This six-foot rubber and canvas globe, painted with continents, oceans, and the dollar sign, attracts people like the force of gravity. Everyone welcomes the chance to play with the planet, whether by pushing, passing, throwing, kicking, or hugging it; on top, beneath, or against it. Some simply gaze in wonder until the rolling sphere comes bearing down on them, and there's nothing to do but respond in the ways only humans are capable.

\$Earthball games range from the most cooperative to the most competitive in the New Games repertoire. While Chute Ball can be a beautiful exercise in harmony, an all-out game of Tournament \$Earthball might reveal the very core and essence of world conflict.

Between these two poles lie endless possibilities for play. Get together with several hundred of your neighbors and let your imaginations and spirits soar. The only rule to remember is: “Play hard, don't play fair, somebody's hurt.”

* Modified from *The New Games Book* (1976)

6. Infinity Boffing

Our ideas about battling are way outdated. Nick Woodman, founder of GoPro, says, “In your personal life and in business, you are your own worst enemy.” An authority no greater than the Buddha agrees when he says, “Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your unguarded thoughts.” These aphorisms affirm that it's not structural inequalities, racism, poverty, or capitalism holding you back, it's actually the enemy within at fault. Keeping in line with this truism, we've updated the swordfight to reflect current knowledge so you may confront yourself in mock battle and succeed in life. Vanquish the imperfections cast back upon you from your image, as you confront the offending mirror with the soft foam boffing sword. Agree upon a target with your opponent, perhaps your head or your heart, and whoever knocks the other in that location three times loses. Winner advances to the next round of infinity boffing.

7. Twitter, Uber, Grinder, Lyft

Appearing like a unicorn, this game revolutionizes all circle-based IRL P2P games. It innovates the hell out of the traditional theater game Pass The Word. It asks you and your team to test your abilities to recall, repeat, and innovate the name of a startup or an online app, YGTI.

First, your team gets in a circle. Then, a leader says a name—Uber, for instance. The next person says Uber, and the word travels around the circle, everyone repeating it in their own innovative way, until it comes back to the leader. The leader can continue to send that company's or app's name around this circle, or they can change the name to another one. Or a new leader can say another company or app name and send that around the circle! Okay, now you have the basic principle. The game starts to really get the LOLZ when two leaders decide to lead and both send names or apps around the circle. Things become pretty crazy when people get creative with the pronunciation and the speed at which they pronounce company names or apps. All this innovating of brand names is gonna make you sick. Good times.

8. Grabster / Sharing Economy

In distributing the game Twister, the Milton Bradley Company made millions of dollars and millions of people happy selling “sex in a box.” In our version of the game, Grabster, we've found a way to sell you a whole lot more than your own pleasure. We're going to sell you things you already own: schools, utilities, infrastructure, and jails. In this version of Twister, what was once held in common is now private, and it's your goal to grab hold of things before someone else gets to them first.

The game is played on a field set with the special Grabster playing board: large color coded tiles with words like Water Department, State University, Interstate, County Jail, Electrical Grid, and Bridge on them. Each tile has a Grabster Handle on it.

The game begins like Twister with players surrounding the playing area. When the referee spins the spinner coded with colors and body parts (right arm, right leg, left leg, left arm, random), the players must place the corresponding part on a tile with the corresponding color. Normally in Twister the game gets fun when players find themselves bending over and under each other in positions of frottage arriving at the appropriate square, communalizing themselves into close quarters. Grabster, however, offers much greater opportunities for stimulation. Rather than a fixed and open grid, Grabster players may actively rearrange and hoard the tiles.

While contorted, individuals or groups of players may choose to grab for a water system, a school, or an energy grid tile and use it as they alone see fit, rearranging the tiles in a manner suiting their interests. This is where the real game is. As the referee continues to lead the grand choreography, directing players between color-coded tiles and body parts, the players continue grabbing at the resources they share between them. Tiles are commodities all the players need to keep from spilling. An alternative to this Twister reboot is self-interest in a box.

9. Frictionless Market: The People Are Our Product

Like Erica Jong's “zipless fuck,” the frictionless market is a dream where products come into our lives effortlessly, bypassing the moderating circuits in our brain. You don't know where they came from but wow, there they are!

In today's market, companies like Amazon are in the business of crushing the space between desire for a thing and the thing itself. Arriving at this jouissance means crushing human and economic resources alike, and man, are they alike. In Frictionless Market, humans are the resources passed overhead in a chain of logistics starting at the warehouse and ending with the customer.

The game begins with people pairing off facing each other, shoulder to shoulder in two long lines. Everyone lies down on their backs, partners now touching the top of their heads and hands in the air. These raised arms create a pipe, a supply chain, and a means by which the players will become product and customer all at once. They will deliver themselves seamlessly to the market. With all players still on the ground, the person at the top of the line is lifted up by the rest and passed person to person down the line to the end, where they take a spot and prepare to move more product (people) along.

Another version of this game throws in a twist. It employs supply chain managers. These managers are helpful but of limited value. They alone can solve logistical problems that appear as the chain develops. But they have to work efficiently because they are only allowed two mistakes before they are sacked. The manager who's able to deliver the product to market first is the winner.

10. Flexible Individual/Neo-liberal Limbo

Work—it's always been something you contort yourself for. In the past, the trade-off for devoting yourself to a job that you'd drag yourself to each morning was a gold watch and a pension. Today it's different. Rather than having true agency, the nature of work has shifted, and it's the boss who holds the power, organized within an anti-worker legal and economic climate. Now more often than not, many feel lucky just to earn a paycheck and have a roof over their head. And the contortions we go through just to be employable: grooming, self-promotion, commuting, and borrowing to invest in our supposed careers. The whole situation is a kind of limbo. You're bending over backwards for someone else, you're not sure why, and you don't know when you're going to be knocked out. In this version of Limbo, the stakes are high, as you can well imagine, because the managers set the rules and the players have to do their bidding to hold on. In this game, the judges don't just hold a stick, they manage the players with their own strange demands.

Before everyone lines up single file, between one and three players are selected from the group as the managers. These people step aside and prepare themselves to run the show. The game begins with them conspiring about the conditions by which the first round will proceed. Shall they create a high bridge by holding hands, offering an easy first turn for the players to pass under, or will they ask the players to pass through their judging gauntlet hopping on one foot while shouting the highlights from their CV? A rich potential for embarrassment and discomfort proceeds with each round, as managers demand increasingly challenging postures and dictates from the players. They may have players crawl between their legs or jump through the hoops of their outstretched arms, or they may simply judge the appearances of the individual players parading before their eyes.

Flexible Individual is a game of elimination, and managers make players redundant as it proceeds. Congratulate the last players in the game; they are the winners. They've won the right to manage the next round.

11. Warehousing People

In this game, there are two teams. The first are those set to be warehoused; the second are those doing the warehousing.

If you are a warehouse worker, your job is to organize the warehouse. You will lift and safely stack people into stacking crates. Your job is to try and make the stacks of people as neat as possible.

If you are being warehoused, congratulations. You are surplus. You have two options. One situation will find you transformed into an inmate. You will be stored by the prison industrial complex in a correctional facility not of your choosing. The second situation finds you as an unemployed member of society. You will find your own means of storage, perhaps in a home, although you will find it increasingly difficult to maintain this shelter due to lack of funds. In either case, your labor has been outsourced thanks to the creative work of engineers and technicians. You may thank your elders (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc.) for finding themselves in a wage-for-labor relationship, in which you now are not currently needed. There are several rational options for someone in your position to consider. They include suicide, prostitution, madness, creative expression, and entrepreneurialism. Ironically, entrepreneur may be the most socially acceptable term to describe your current condition, because if you got nothing, you best start figuring out how to make it something. Either way, as surplus you'll spend a lot of time not doing much. For the warehoused, it may simply be your game to endure.

12. Keeping Busy aka No Win aka Bartleby the Scrivener

Derived from a game that a chum and his mates played as students in Cambridge called No Win, this version of the game, Keeping Busy, retains a similar spirit of pointless self-imposed make-work. The game borrows its pathos from the words of Bartleby, a character in a short story by the American author Herman Melville.

The game begins when one person, standing on high, asks the other players the innocent-sounding question, “Keeping Busy?” At this point, the players may either respond with a “Yes, I am,” or “I would prefer not to,” just as Bartleby did when he was confronted with work that didn't suit his nature. If a player's answer is “I would prefer not to,” they simply stand on the field with a hand held high in refusal for the duration of the round. If the answer is “Yes,” that player begins to move and gesture and talk repetitively in a manner resembling what it is that they do to look busy all day long. A whole field of busywork becomes a lot of something as individuals continue looking busy until they are asked again, “Keeping Busy?” Again, they may either respond with Bartleby's retort “I would prefer not to,” absenting themselves from spastic distraction, or they can say “Yes” and find a new way to appear occupied.

And so the game goes, lasting until the final player decides it's time to stop their busy dance to become a Bartleby, preferring not to participate in this game of appearances. At this point, all other players may retire their raised and complaining arm and wrap up the game. But be warned, a new game may break out if anyone steps up and asks the group “Keeping Busy?”

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