

Telephone Game Rules and Phrases

Whisper a phrase once around the circle, then compare the last version with the original.

Host guide / Letter / Friends & adult social / 10–20 minutes

Read the guide privately first if this activity has hidden answers. Print single-sided at Actual size / 100%. Cut only sheets marked CARDS. Keep answer keys with the host.

What you need

- A list of the starter phrases below
- A quiet circle where players can hear a whisper
- Optional: paper to keep the original phrase hidden

How to run it

1. Seat 5–12 willing players in a line or circle. The moderator chooses one phrase and shows it only to the first player.
2. The first player whispers the phrase once to the next player. Each person may ask for one repeat, but may not write the phrase down or ask the previous player to spell it.
3. Continue until the last player hears the phrase. That player says the version they received aloud.
4. The moderator reads the original phrase. Compare the two versions and enjoy the change without blaming anyone.
5. Choose a new phrase and rotate the starting player. Play two or three rounds, then stop or switch to another activity.

Keep the phrase easy to hear

Use a short, friendly sentence with familiar words and no private names. A quiet room helps everyone participate. If someone cannot hear or prefers not to whisper, allow the phrase to be passed quietly in writing as an accessibility option, then return to the spoken format if the group wants.

The point is not perfect memory. A phrase can change because someone mishears a word, interprets an image differently, or simply remembers a nearby sound. Treat the final version as a group surprise, not a performance score.

- Use original phrases or a player's own harmless sentence.
- Avoid secrets, real gossip, personal information, or jokes aimed at a player.

Set the turn order and repeat rule

A circle makes it easy to know whose turn comes next; a line works for a larger room. Decide before starting whether each person gets one repeat. Keep the same rule for every round so the game stays fair. The moderator can keep the original phrase face down until the final player speaks.

For a short group, play multiple rounds and rotate the first player. For a larger gathering, split into circles rather than making one long line where people wait.

- Do not let players intentionally shout or distort the phrase.
- No writing, drawing, or acting is included in this Telephone version.

Close the round kindly

After the final phrase is revealed, read the original and the final version once. Invite a brief reaction, then move on. Do not ask who “caused” the biggest change or make a player repeat the phrase for laughs. If the group wants a different challenge, try a new sentence with a clearer rhythm.

The game works best with light topics: travel, food, books, weather, and ordinary objects. A player can sit out a round or take the moderator role.

- Praise the whole chain, not an individual mistake.
- Stop if the room becomes too loud or the activity stops being fun.

CARDS / Telephone Game Rules and Phrases

<p>R_TELEPHONE-001 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The blue umbrella waited beside the garden gate.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-002 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A sleepy cat watched the train cross the river.</p>
<p>R_TELEPHONE-003 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>Three apples rolled beneath the picnic table.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-004 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The lighthouse keeper packed a warm orange scarf.</p>
<p>R_TELEPHONE-005 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A paper boat sailed past the yellow mailbox.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-006 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The baker saved one cinnamon roll for later.</p>

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<p>R_TELEPHONE-007 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A curious robin hopped across the garden path.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-008 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The library opened early for a rainy morning.</p>
<p>R_TELEPHONE-009 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A small sailboat drifted past the old stone pier.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-010 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The green suitcase held a map and a music book.</p>
<p>R_TELEPHONE-011 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A neighbor planted sunflowers beside the front steps.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-012 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The moon looked bright over the quiet harbor.</p>

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<p>R_TELEPHONE-013 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A silver spoon disappeared inside the picnic basket.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-014 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The little café served soup in a blue bowl.</p>
<p>R_TELEPHONE-015 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A bicycle bell rang near the farmers market.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-016 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The striped blanket covered a stack of paperback books.</p>
<p>R_TELEPHONE-017 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The train conductor carried a thermos of tea.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-018 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A red kite floated above the community garden.</p>

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<p>R_TELEPHONE-019 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The orange scarf matched the autumn leaves.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-020 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A postcard arrived from a town by the sea.</p>
<p>R_TELEPHONE-021 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The puzzle box sat beside a cup of cocoa.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-022 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A wooden sign pointed toward the lakeside trail.</p>
<p>R_TELEPHONE-023 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>The garden hose made a tiny rainbow in the sunlight.</p>	<p>R_TELEPHONE-024 / Telephone starter phrase</p> <p>A sleepy dog carried one sock to the porch.</p>

Hosting questions

How many people work well for Telephone?

Five to twelve people can play in one circle. Larger groups can split into teams.

Can players ask for a repeat?

Decide before the round whether one repeat is allowed, then use the same rule for everyone.

Is this the drawing game Telephone Pictionary?

No. This page covers the whispered-phrase version and does not include drawing or writing turns.

References

Reviewed for the classic whispered-message mechanic; the starter phrases and host guidance here are original.

<https://pedia.games/en/games/broken-telephone>

Original AI-assisted resource with AI editorial review. Independent human playtesting and physical printing have not been completed. Answer, listen, or pass.