



# THE FLOOR IS LAVA

and 99 more games for  
everyone, everywhere

IVAN BRETT

## CHAPTER 6

# CABIN FEVER

It's a Sunday afternoon in early February. The rain snivels down like a nose with a persistent cold. You wouldn't leave the house even if it were on fire, yet there's nothing to do inside either. You're so bored that the word 'bored' has become boring. The kids are climbing the walls (not literally). Hang on, yes, literally. Your five-year-old is now hanging from the curtain.

You need something, *anything* to entertain you before headaches, crying and comfort food absorb your entire weekend. And guess what I have in this chapter?

I've collected these games with a rainy weekend in mind. Some use your home for inspiration, so there's no reason to leave it, but you'll be using it in a very different way from usual. Others are creative or absorbing enough to have you ignoring Storm Desmond, or whatever they're calling him, and whiling away the afternoon until it turns into evening. You're just one scrap of paper or, in one case, a saucepan, away from a perfectly pleasant day together, even though you're stuck inside.

# 51. Sniffer Dog

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
2+	Easy	5 mins per round

**IN SHORT:** One player draws an item that’s nearby. Everybody else has to go and find it.

## WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- A pad of paper (you’ll be drawing all around the house, not always on a table) and a pencil.
- A place where you can safely move about without disturbing people or their belongings.



## HOW TO PLAY

The game begins with all players exploring the surrounding area, carefully taking mental note of everything they can see. The players decide on a certain area as their ‘boundary’, for example the house, but not outside it.

Now, one player, the artist, chooses something in the area that’s easily visible (i.e. not hidden in a box or behind a locked door) and draws a picture of it on a piece of paper. The other players are the sniffer dogs. At any point during the drawing, the sniffer dogs may peel off to find that item. When they think they’ve found it, they bark loudly, and place their hand or finger on the item, at which point everybody else comes to see. If they’re correct, they win the round and it’s their turn to draw. If not, the artist continues to draw their item until it is found.

No sniffer dog may bark, woof or whine **unless they have their paw on the item**. If they bark as they’re searching, then it sends a dishonest message to the other players, so they’re in the doghouse (sitting out) for the rest of that round. If two sniffer dogs are barking at the same time, the artist should know the location where the real item actually is, so be able to discern who is the winning dog.

If two sniffer dogs find the item at the same time, the round is a tie and they can decide between them who draws next round.

# 52. Endless Sentence

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
2	Easy	15 mins

**IN SHORT:** One player tells a story. The other makes sure that their sentence never ends.

**WHAT YOU'LL NEED**

- Nothing at all.



**HOW TO PLAY**

First of all, you need to be acquainted with conjunctions. These words, also known as connectives or ‘joiny-bits’, according to one of my pupils, are the glue that stick two clauses together. (A clause is a group of words that makes sense on its own.) So, for example, ‘The dog bit the postman **because** he looked so tasty.’

Without conjunctions, your sentences can only contain one clause, and that’s just boring! Below is a cloud of conjunctions. You’ll need to keep this page open, probably, when you play the game. If you can’t hold the page open, then spell out the words in alphabetti spaghetti or tattoo them on your grandmother’s arm. Not literally, of course, unless she’s down for that sort of thing.

***Conjunctions Cloud***

- |                |              |                         |
|----------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| • additionally | • as long as | • by the time           |
| • afterwards   | • as soon as | • consequently          |
| • also         | • as well as | • despite the fact that |
| • although     | • because    | • due to                |
| • and          | • before     | • even though           |
| • as if        | • but        | • for                   |

- |                |             |            |
|----------------|-------------|------------|
| • furthermore  | • or        | • unless   |
| • however      | • or else   | • until    |
| • in case      | • otherwise | • when     |
| • including    | • owing to  | • whenever |
| • meanwhile    | • since     | • where    |
| • moreover     | • so        | • wherever |
| • nevertheless | • so that   | • while    |
| • next         | • then      | • yet      |
| • once         | • though    |            |

To play this game, the storyteller will begin a story with a simple sentence. You can use a first line from my list (see page 246), or come up with your own. The only limitation is that it must be a whole clause (containing a subject and an action) and not just a short phrase. ‘Once upon a time’, for example, is not enough, because ‘Once upon a time **and** . . .’ doesn’t make sense.

Then the other player, the conjoiner, will shout out one of the conjunctions from the cloud, and the storyteller must continue the story using that conjunction. The twist is that at the end of every clause, the conjoiner will shout another conjunction, so that your sentence goes on and on, telling the whole story without ever stopping. It’s amazing how far your story can go on one sentence.

Once the story has reached a natural end, you can stop shouting conjunctions and the roles will swap. Now it’s the other player’s turn to try the Endless Sentence.

**EXAMPLE**

**Storyteller:** *'Timmy the seal went for a swim . . .'*

**Conjoiner:** *'after . . .'*

**Storyteller:** *'he'd finished his dinner . . .'*

**Conjoiner:** *'because . . .'*

**Storyteller:** *'he felt fat and flabby . . .'*

**Conjoiner:** *'so . . .'*

**Storyteller:** *'he swam far out into the ocean . . .'*

**Conjoiner:** *'where . . .'*

**Storyteller:** *'he found a grumpy whale, filtering plankton . . .'*

*Etc.*

**TIPS**

- If you are the conjoiner, you must listen carefully to the story and be as involved as the storyteller. Not all conjunctions will work at the end of every clause. If I say, 'One day, I climbed a mountain,' and you add 'or else', I'm stuck.
- You could try to use every conjunction on the list, or repeat the same one again and again. Try a mixture!

## 53. Pan-Tapping

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
2+	Easy	5 mins

**IN SHORT:** Help a player find an item just by tapping.

### WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Something you can tap on. Tambourines, wooden spoons on saucepans, or just use your voice.



### HOW TO PLAY

Have one player, the hunter, leave the room. The other players should decide between them on **an item** in the room (or the whole house, if you like) that you want the hunter to find.

The hunter now re-enters the room and the rest of the players begin to tap their pans in a slow and steady rhythm, like a drum beat. If you have nothing to tap, use your voice. Start with a low hum.

The closer the hunter gets to the item, the faster you tap your pan, or the higher you hum. If they move away again, you tap slower again. Just by listening to your taps, they can track down the exact location of the hidden item. Make sure you don’t look at the item!

When the hunter touches the item, they win! It’s time to choose another player to leave the room.

### LEVEL-UP

This game can also be played by choosing a particular movement or gesture rather than an item. You tap your pan faster the closer the hunter gets to making that movement. For example, if you want the hunter to get on their hands and knees and bark like a dog, then you would tap faster when they lean over, then faster still when they kneel, etc . . .

## 54. Silly Word Snowballs

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
<b>2+</b>	<b>Easy</b>	<b>15 mins</b>

**IN SHORT:** Create special snowballs containing words to make your opponents laugh.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Permission from the person who owns the house that it's OK to throw paper about – make sure there's nothing breakable nearby.
- Pencils and scrap paper. (Don't use nice paper for this. You'll use a lot.)

**TAGS:**  
ACTIVE,  
AROUND THE  
HOUSE, SILLY

### HOW TO PLAY

First of all, you need to make some silly snowballs. To do this, write a short sentence or just a word on a piece of paper, and then scrunch it up. It doesn't even need to be a real word – whatever you think will make the other players laugh.

To begin with, why not make about **three** snowballs each.

When you're ready, the snowball fight begins. Count down from ten together so that you can all get to a shielded space, and on zero, begin!

As soon as a paper snowball directly hits another player, everybody who sees it shouts, 'CEASEFIRE!' and the round ends. (Picking up a snowball does not count as it 'hitting' you.)

At this point, the person who was hit by a snowball must stand up straight, pick up the snowball that hit her and un-scrunch it. She must then read aloud the contents of that snowball without laughing. If you want to be mean, you could decide beforehand that she cannot even smile.

If she laughs (or smiles), then the person who wrote the snowball gets a point. If not, then she gets a point. If she wrote the snowball that hit her, she must scrunch that one up without reading it aloud and pick up the nearest one to her.



The 'used' snowball is cast aside (in the recycling) and after a countdown, the game begins again. If you're low on snowballs then between rounds you should make some more.

The game ends when it actually begins to snow and you can all go outside to play the real version of this game.

## TIPS

- Think about the things that will make somebody laugh when forced to say them out loud. There are plenty of great gags that are amusing when delivered right, but a different sort of thing will make me chuckle as I read it.
- There's no rule as to what the other players can do while the hit player is reading out their snowball, but a tense silence is often the most conducive to making them laugh. There is such a thing as trying too hard to be funny.

# 55. The Floor Is Lava

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
2+	Easy	Endless

**IN SHORT:** A great physical game to play at home. Just don't play it around precious things.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Permission from the person who owns the house that it's OK to climb about on their furniture.



## HOW TO PLAY

This is an ongoing game, which works best when sprung upon people in the room/area at random times. Simply, one person yells, ‘The floor is lava!’ and then starts counting down from five. Every other person must be completely off the ground by the time the counter reaches zero. What, or who, they climb on is up to them, but if any part of them remains on the ground then they’ll be burnt to a crisp.

## LEVEL-UP

- At this point, you’ve probably had enough fun and someone might have broken a vase or ankle, but you’re probably wondering when you’re allowed to get down. The game can continue if you challenge other players to get to a certain place without touching the ground. Watch as each player creatively devises a plan for crossing the dangerous lava without burning their toes.

# 56. The Silent Game

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
2+	Easy	Depends how good you are!

IN SHORT: Shh!

## WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Nothing at all.

TAGS:  
COMPETITIVE,  
AROUND THE  
HOUSE, SILLY

## HOW TO PLAY

Glorious! A game that gets people to be quiet! Well . . . it isn’t that simple, because the aim of the game is to get your opponents to make a noise. You could do anything, be that making silly faces, giving an intense stare or pretending to be a gorilla.

Any noise counts, so listen out for footsteps, sighing or the odd occasional snort.

The thing is, not being able to make a noise makes everything more tense. If you’re looking to quieten some people down, look in the Just Chill Out chapter (page 207). This one’s all about self-awareness and poise . . . not exactly a relaxing experience.

An important rule here is that there should be **no physical contact**. Of course your opponent will make some noise if you hit them hard enough. Where’s the fun in that?

## LEVEL-UP

- How about both trying to do a normal life task without making a noise? You could try pairing socks, cooking dinner together or doing the school run, all without making a single noise. I wonder how it’ll change your appreciation of the little things . . .

## 57. Disregarded Things

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
2+	Medium	10-20 mins

**IN SHORT:** Adopt the personality of forgotten things in your house, and see how long the other players take to find them.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Nothing at all.

**TAGS:**  
CREATIVE,  
GUESSING,  
AROUND THE  
HOUSE

### HOW TO PLAY

I found this game years ago in one of Pie Corbett's excellent books on literacy, *Jumpstart! Literacy*, and had to include a version of it. It was originally devised by poet Philip Gross, and I think it's genius.

Move about a room, and try to find something that you think nobody else will have seen. It might be a scrap of paper on the floor or a shoe mark on the skirting board.

Now, try to imagine you *are* that thing. Tell the other players what it feels like to be you, what you can see from where you are, how you came to be where you are, what it's like living wherever you live. Don't give too many obvious clues about where you're found, but make sure that you're really in the character of your disregarded thing.

The other players must search the room, trying to work out who you are. Eventually they'll find you, and somebody else will play the role of their disregarded thing.

### TIP

- This game is all about personification, which takes empathy. Bringing an item to life is all about trying to think what they'd feel, say, think and do if they were alive. It's not easy, which is all the more reason to try it.

# 58. Monsters of the Nook and Cranny

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
1+	Medium	It entirely depends

**IN SHORT:** Your house is full of tiny monsters. Or, at least, it will be after you’ve finished this game.

## WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Modelling material (clay, plasticine, cold porcelain, etc.) OR drawing equipment.

**TAGS:**  
CREATIVE,  
ARTY, AROUND  
THE HOUSE,  
LONG-TERM

## HOW TO PLAY

Explore your house as if you’re looking for mice, or other tiny beasts. Think of all the places they might live: in the kitchen cupboards? In the pocket of an old coat? At the bottom of the toothbrush holder?

In this game, you will imagine what tiny, evil (or cute) monsters live in these little unexplored places, then create those monsters and leave them there, never to be found. (Eventually, they will be found, and that’s the joy of this game. How long will they hide before somebody comes across them?)

So, once you’ve decided on your hidden nook or cranny in your house, imagine what sort of beast would make it their home. What would the monster do down there? What would it eat? What would make that little space the perfect home for your monster?

Have a go at drawing your monster, giving it a name, and writing down what it spends its day doing.

Next, it’s time to create your monster. If you have some modelling clay or plasticine, use this. Make it as small as it needs to be. Think about which animal or monster parts it will have. (Legs or wings? Antennae? A shell?) What colour would it need to be to blend in with its environment, never to be found?

If you don’t have any modelling materials, draw your monster on a tiny square of paper or card.

Once your model/drawing is finished, it is time to deliver him to his new home. Make sure he's safe in there. If you like, you could leave a little message of explanation. It could say who this monster is, why he is where he is, and what anyone should do if they find him.

Leave your monster to his new life. If you like, check on him after a few days to see if he's settled in. The more monsters you can create and hide away in your house, the better you are doing at this game!

### **IMPORTANT**

- If you have little children or animals who roam about the house, don't leave anything small and swallowable anywhere that they could get their tiny mitts or paws on. If you're playing this game on your own, it might be worth checking with one other person that this is a good place to hide your monster.

# 59. Jumble

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
1+	Medium	5 mins per round

**IN SHORT:** A well-known anagrams game.

## WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Letter cards (see below), cut up and put in two separate hats.
- A mini whiteboard and one pen per player, or paper and pencils.
- Timer – use a stopwatch or your phone.
- Dictionary (online is fine) to check spellings.



## HOW TO PLAY

As you can see, there’s a little preparation needed for this game. It won’t take long, and don’t be put off, as it’s well worth the effort.

Cut some paper or card into little squares. On each one you’ll need to write a letter, but it’s quite important you get the number of each letter right.

**Vowels:** You need 4 of **E**, 3 of **A**, 3 of **I**, 3 of **O** and 1 of **U**. Put these 14 cards in the vowels hat.

**Consonants:** You need 5 each of **D**, **L**, **N**, **R**, **S** and **T**, 3 each of **C**, **G**, **M** and **P**, and 1 each of **B**, **F**, **H**, **J**, **K**, **Q**, **V**, **W**, **X**, **Y** and **Z**. Put these 53 cards in the consonants hat.

Each round, one player will select nine letters from the hats and place them on the table. You can select however many vowels and consonants you like, but you must pick the cards one by one and not look inside the hats as you pick. A mixture of vowels and consonants is useful, but you’ll soon learn how many of each is best, and even if you get it wrong, at least everyone will have the same challenge.

Once the cards have been picked, put one minute on the timer and begin.

The aim is to spell the longest word using the letters that you have chosen. If playing alone, you can jumble around the cards to find your word.

You may not use proper nouns (names such as 'London', 'Facebook' or 'John'), slang ('Haha', 'Innit') or abbreviations ('BRB', 'LOL').

At the end of the time, the players share the longest word they have found. I like to give everybody points equal to their longest word. Alternatively, this game works perfectly well without scoring whatsoever.

### EXAMPLE

*The letters chosen are: A G P D E I T S P.*

**Player 1's** longest word is 'TIPS'. She gets 4 points.

**Player 2's** longest word is 'PEPSI', but that is a proper noun. His next longest word is 'AGES'. He gets 4 points.

**Player 3's** longest word is 'DESPITE', which would give 7 points, but she used E twice. Her second best word, 'PAGES', earns her 5 points.

### TIPS

- After each round, why not use an online resource such as [www.thewordfinder.com](http://www.thewordfinder.com) to find the longest possible word? Some of the top ones are just impossible to get, but see if there was a word longer than yours that you could have found. Which blends of consonants did it use? How did the word begin and end? These sorts of questions will help you develop some skills for the next round.
- Try looking for common word endings such as 'ING' and 'ED'.
- If you are only getting 3–4 letter words, try blending the consonants on offer. 'ND' often go together in a word, as do 'ST'. Play around with these blends instead of single letters.

### LEVEL-UP

- Collect up everyone's longest (or favourite) word from the same round and put them together into a stupid sentence. So, in this round, the sentence could be, 'It takes me **ages** to write any **pages** of this book because the **tips** on my pens keep breaking'.



# 60. Double Acrostic

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	TIME
1+	Medium	10 mins

**IN SHORT:** One acrostic on the left, one on the right, your words in the middle. Can you do it?

## WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- Paper and pencils.

TAGS:  
WIND-DOWN,  
VOCABULARY,  
SPELLING

## HOW TO PLAY

This game is calming and satisfying: perfect for long days indoors.

An acrostic is a word-game or poem where certain letters of each line form a word. In this case we will end up with several words listed on a page, for which the first and last letters will form words reading upwards and downwards.

Think of **two** words that have the **same number of letters**. They could be names, two related places, or anything, really. Write one word vertically downwards on the left of your page, and the other going upwards on the right-hand side of the page.

Your job is to find words that begin with the letter on the left and end with the letter on the right. It doesn’t matter how long or short the connecting word is. Write them in to join the two words.

**EXAMPLE**

*I've made a double acrostic with two of my favourite words: 'chocolate milkshake'. One goes down on the left, one goes up on the right.*

C		A	K				E
H		A	D	D	O	C	K
O		M	E	G			A
C		R	A	S			H
O	L	I	V	E			S
L	I	M	E	R	I	C	K
A		S	T	R	A		L
T	A	N	D	O	O	R	I
E		D	A				M

**LEVEL-UP**

- If you want your double acrostic to remain a smart, juicy grid, then why not try to find words of the same length to fit each row? It's a tough challenge, so perhaps wait to decide how long every word must be until you've got a few ideas.

Taken from **The Floor Is Lava** by **Ivan Brett**

Packed with 100 different games, this is a how-to for turning time together into quality time together.

Playing games can be so enjoyable but don't you often find yourself playing the same old games time and time again? Well why not let Ivan Brett inspire you with over 99 games to entertain any gathering of friends or family.



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