

What the game is like

Players portray covert time-travelers in a populated place gathering essential ingredients for a magical ritual that will transform their own lives and the universal timeline. Some players portray time-police. These time-cops are trying to prevent the ritual's completion by anyone who isn't a time-cop, without revealing their own affiliation.

The ritual combines the sweet fluidity of movement with the sourness and bitterness of life's challenges to produce an uplifting, cool, and refreshing experience. You wish to accomplish this without being "caught" outside your ritual space by the time-cops (portrayed by other players & by non-players).

- There are two roles: the time police, and everyone else.
- Only time-cops can "catch" people, and only one-on-one. They do this by asking what you're doing.
- If a non-player asks what you're doing, the time-cops have caught you.
- If you are caught by a time-cop, you switch roles.
- If you recruit a nonplayer who caught you, they join with you in the role you've just switched to.
- If you catch a time-cop, they catch you too. Both switch.
- In games of three or more, about half start as time-cops.

Keywords

Themes: time travel; lemonade; dance, movement, somatic experience; magical realism; role-swapping time-cops.

Experience: uplifting, cool, refreshing, subtle.

Play activities: observing, matching, & collecting movements & expressions; being subtle and/or getting caught; social deduction; recruiting players. Possibly making and drinking actual lemonade.

Play spaces

This game is meant to be played in two spaces: a public gathering place and a safer private place. The private place is a magical space where players can move and express freely. The other is highly populated—eg a big convention, an airport, or a mall—with people you can observe. Ideally they'll be in various sorts of motion with a variety of expressions on their faces.

You can create both spaces at once with a private screening of Beyoncé's *Lemonade*.

Safety

- Be friendly to yourselves and to each other.
- Be friendly in your movements, and in your words, sounds, & expressions.
- When decorating your magic circle, take care to do so in ways that respect the cultures from which you draw inspiration.
- Touch between players is outside the scope of this game.

One or more players

Win Conditions

The time police win if everyone completing the ritual is a time-cop. Otherwise, everyone who isn't a time-cop wins.

Recipe (game phases)

The game takes place in these phases; ingredient quantities for the (optional) nonmagical lemonade are per-player. You will need a standard deck of playing cards, or some other way of randomizing roles in secret.

- **A clean pitcher:** create the space for the transformational ritual. Distribute roles.
- **One lemon:** name aloud one thing you're feeling sour or bitter about.
- **Gathering Sweet and Sour:** wander through a large crowd, gathering ingredients for the ritual & avoiding time-cops.
 - **Juice your lemons:** gather expressions from a crowd; find a face that matches your feels.
 - **¼ cup simple syrup:** gather movements from the crowd until they're sweet and fluid.
- **Mix syrup and juice with ½ cup water:** add all juice & syrup to pitcher and stir.
- **Sip and enjoy:** appreciate your creation together, and debrief.

Actual lemonade ingredients are optional; if you are making nonmagical lemonade, you'll want lemons, simple syrup (made in advance), water, a pitcher, a knife, and possibly ice, a cutting board, a reamer, and a strainer.

Simple syrup is equal parts water & sugar, heated & stirred until fully combined; if you're going to use it, make it in advance.

A clean pitcher (setup)

In each phase, take turns reading aloud to each other that phase's instructions, and follow them immediately.

Each player gets a copy of this game text.

Read aloud the Safety text; check for shared agreement.

Choose a space that could be safe for expressive movement, including facial and vocal expression. Together, do what you can to make it so. Decorate in whatever way feels evocative for you. Players may wish to bring objects that evoke for them this sense of sacred and magical space.

This is a now magic circle, made to hold all the sweet and sour that we might wish to juice from this experience.

Distribute roles

In games of three or more players, distribute roles:

1. count the players; if there's an odd number, add one.
2. shuffle together that many cards, half red and half black.
3. deal the cards randomly to the players, such that no one knows anyone else's card.

Anyone who got a red card starts as a time-cop. In one- and two-player games, you start without time police.

15-90 minutes

One lemon each

After the circle is made, each player starts the ritual for themselves by reviewing these instructions and saying aloud into the circle one thing that they feel bitter or sour about, one thing that's hard in their life right now, or one thing they wish were going (or had gone) differently.

Players who join after the space was created, please be sure to review the safety notes.

If you're also making lemonade that's merely real & not yet fully magical, check that you have the ingredients you'll need.

Gathering Sweet and Sour

If you're not a member of the time police, your goal is to gather ingredients for the time-transformation ritual.

If you *are* a member of the time police, your goal is to "catch" the people performing this ritual without giving yourself away as a time-cop—and without getting caught by other time-cops yourself.

Players are likely to switch roles during play.

Either way, you'll need a sour expression and some sweet fluid movement. Go out into the crowd and—without being "caught" collecting ingredients—try on the movements and expressions of the people around you until you believe you've got the ones you want to contribute to the ritual. Then return to the magic circle.

If you're playing in a group, it may help to agree a specific duration for this gathering phase.

If you're also enchanting some non-magical lemonade to support the ritual, this is when to gather any missing ingredients.

Getting Caught by the Time Police

There are several ways to get caught by the time-police:

1. If another player asks you what you are doing, you have been caught by the time police.
2. If a non-player looks at you strangely, visibly recognizes that you're copying them, or asks what you are doing, you have been caught; what constitutes a strange look or visible recognition is up to your discretion.
3. If you're a time-cop, and you catch another time-cop, they caught you too. Whoops.

Any player who is caught (including by non-players) says either:

- "I was looking for lemonade" (if they were a time-cop) or
- "I was making lemonade" (if they were not a time-cop).

After saying this, that player then switches roles.

Recruiting Additional Players

Players may invite non-players to join the game; if a nonplayer joins, follow these six steps together:

1. If the magic circle is convenient, go there together; otherwise, go somewhere you can initiate the ritual.
2. Recruiter, give the new player a copy of the game text.
3. Review the game text together.

4. Establish the safety agreements with each other.
5. Recruiter, answer any questions the new player has.
6. Initiate the ritual together, with the new player and their recruiter naming aloud their lemons.

Both players then continue in the Gathering Sweet and Sour phase. As a reminder: the new player starts in the same role as the one their recruiter just switched to.

Juice Your Lemons

Wander the crowd. Notice the expressions on others' faces; see what faces they're making. Try them on by making faces like them. Try variations. Your goal is to discover some that match how you feel inside when you think about the lemon that you named.

¼ cup Simple Syrup

Wander the crowd. Notice how people move through the space around you; see how they move. Try on their movements by moving like them, and vary those movements. Your goal is to discover movements that feel sweet and fluid to you.

When gathering movements, it is not necessary to hold the facial expressions you've gathered, and vice versa.

Some players find it helpful to match movements and expressions for varying lengths of time.

Mix Syrup, Juice, & Water

Return to the magic circle. Combine your lemon juice with your simple syrup—make those sweet fluid movements with your body while moving through the ritual space wearing expressions that best match how you feel about your lemon. Notice that the expressions you choose may change as your feelings change.

Remember to do this free of touch between players.

If you're also enchanting some non-magical lemonade to support the ritual, and you haven't yet juiced the lemons, this is when to do that.

Sip & Enjoy (conclude, debrief)

Drink your magical lemonade. Give non-verbal appreciation to each other's movements, and your own. Go around once sharing what you've discovered through play—or commenting on the weather.

(Send feedback to gavin@specialsnowflakegames.com.)

Credits

Lemonade (a tribute) was made by a queer biracial team of nonbinary folks, Elliott Smith and Gavin White. We're femme and masc, and other things besides.

We drew inspiration from and feel gratitude for many works we admire—including Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, the work of Kathryn and Gay Hendricks, Avery Alder's *Teen Witch*, Jackson Tengu's *Glitch Iteration*, the Wachowski Sisters' *Matrix* trilogy, and many variations on big cooperative games with hidden-teams mechanics. We're grateful also to our partners, friends, colleagues, and playtesters, who inspire and encourage us.

