

## **The Dishwashing Game**

By Venn Wylde, for the 2017 Golden Cobra

### **Pitch**

A cooperative game for three to six players and a facilitator. We will strive for team efficiency and effectiveness, in an attempt to prevent foodborne illness through the thorough and timely application of hot soapy water, bleach, and science. You'll need a supply of dirty dishes and a kitchen facility of some kind. Rudimentary facilities can make the improvisational nature of play more interesting and engaging. Players will occupy different roles, each of which will have a turn handling and processing each dish, until all the dishes are clean.

Half an hour to prep the first time you play in any given space.

You can set up and play each round in half an hour plus however long it takes to draw the washing water. This doesn't include whatever process you use to generate piles of dirty dishes.

### **Libretto**

This game was developed primarily during a 55-person house con held over labor day weekend of 2017. Major iterations in play came as a result of feedback from twice-daily playtests over the course of the weekend. The playtesters were too numerous to name, and besides I forgot to ask their permission to name them.

Early feedback from our first playtesters indicated a need for a way to prevent the outflow of water from the sinks in which the game was being played, as well as ways to gather and pre-scrape dishes from around the playing areas being used for the meal-eating game. Our game support crew reported that sink stoppers were unavailable in local shops, and there was only one washtub, so we improvised the use of pots from the kitchen (which we were careful to share with the cooks).

On our second day of playtesting, one of our playtesters lost several pieces of jewelry to the overly strong bleach solution. This led us to research the precise calculations to perform that would ensure the bleach was not only strong enough but also not too strong — which is reflected in this version.

This is a work in progress.

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3-6 players, plus facilitator; many of the specified game components can be improvised.

## The process, from the point of view of a dish

*I'm dirty, lonely, and lost. The world is noisy, but the noise may be distant. My useful life is at an end.  
Yay! Someone has come to pick me up and put me with my friends! We go to be cleansed!  
We're waiting. I can hear other dishes being scraped and rinsed. When will it be my turn?  
Ah! The chunks of food are being brushed or scraped off, it feels so good to be—  
oooooh, better, a hot spray of water to rinse away the grody bits that compacted on me when I was in that stack of dishes.  
And now we wait again, a stack of dishes by the sink. Are we in a bus-tub? Maybe.  
Are we being carried to another place, beside another sink? Perhaps.  
And then... Immersion. Hot soapy water. A moment of total peace.  
AND NOW SCRUBBING! WHAT ALCHEMY IS THIS?!? I AM CLEAN AND SUDSY!  
Another immersive moment. No soap. Just me in the clear hot water.  
Out of the water. Into the lukewarm sanitizing rinse, to sit for a minute.  
Waiting. Waiting with bleach.  
Pulled out, and propped up to drip drain and evaporate dry.  
To dry, and to await the person who will put me back on a shelf with all my friends. To await — rebirth.*

## Other process notes:

If there are dishwashing machines, use them for as much of the work as possible.

**During play:** Any time the rinse or bleach water gets cloudy, the rinse or scrub water cool off to lukewarm, or the scrub water loses its suds, replace such failing game-pieces. Likewise verify occasionally that the bleach water is still between 50 & 100ppm available chlorine; if you don't have test strips, just remake the solution. If you have little or no water pressure, optionally curse the gods while you do it.

**After play:** drain and wash your sinks, pots, or washtubs. Optimally, try to get any tubs or pots used in cleaning through the wash-rinse-sanitize sequence too.

**Outside the scope of this game:** putting away clean dishes, which should only happen after they've fully dried, and should only be done by people who have properly washed their hands, but should also definitely happen before the next meal.

## Roles for humans

- **facilitator:** set up play area in advance (20 minutes after start of meal, run water for bleach station, then rinse station, then scrub station; add bleach to bleach water; verify all other game prep complete); recruit players for all other roles, and on-board them for the game; check in with dishwashing team throughout play to ensure they have what they need to be effective.
- **gatherer:** round up dishes from the dining areas; use a bus tub; leave full tub for pre-rinse, take empty tub from same area. (or have people bus their own dishes)
- **pre-rinser:** turn (maybe-)scraped dishes into scraped-and-rinsed dishes (quality control on the inputs to the main dishwashing process); rinsed outputs go into a bus tub; it can be useful to soak utensils at this point.
- **dish-runner:** bring full tubs of rinsed dishes from pre-rinse area to washing area (remove this role if these two spaces are adjacent and connected to each other).

- **scrubber:** wash the rinsed dishes in hot water, wipe off suds and food particles, place into rinse tub for rinser.
- **rinser:** ensure all suds and food particles are removed from washed dishes; if not, return to scrubber; once dishes are rinsed, place into bleach tub. (can combine with dipper role)
- **dipper:** leave each item in the bleach water for a full minute; set bleached items aside to air dry.

## Game components

4 aprons (you don't actually need aprons unless you want to protect your clothes)

Trash can / slop or scraps bucket

Dish scraper (or any utensil) — and a sprayer if possible! (*Commercial dishwasher if possible!*)

Five bus-tubs, with the following functions:

1. gather dishes from dining area
2. hold dishes for rinsing
3. gather rinsed dishes
4. carry rinsed dishes
5. hold dishes for washing

Nine pairs of gloves (long-cuffed thick non-latex) sized small, large, medium (3 ea)

*You can just use your hands, but some people will only play if you have gloves in their size.*

Three large sinks with stoppers; alternatively, use washtubs or pots.

### In tub 1:

Hot soapy water.

Scrub brush (or just use your hands; these dishes got scraped already, right?)

*Hope the place you're playing has a water heater, or boil water over fire.*

*Keep near tub 1: some fresh sponges, and more soap*

### In tub 2 (largest, for dilution of soap as it comes off the dishes):

Just hot water (Again, hope for a water heater, or boil water over a fire.)

### In tub 3 (which needs to be sized for full-immersion dipping):

Lukewarm water and bleach (50-100ppm bleach; ~0.5-1oz of Clorox in 5 gallons of water)

*Bleach test strips can be useful, if you want to verify that your sanitizing solution is the right concentration. Otherwise do some math, or wing it and hope.*

### Drying area:

A large drying rack or well-cleaned drip-drying area. These need to be large enough, or great enough in number, to hold all the dishes that are to be cleaned.

Do not towel dry — towels introduce bacteria to your freshly-cleaned dishes.

*Some people like to have an absorbent thing to set their dishes on at this stage, but that probably has the same problem as a towel. There are, however, other options, such as silicone drying mats or just a rubber shower mat that you can run through the washing and sanitizing process ahead of the dishes. (You'll definitely want something like that if you can't adequately clean the drying surface.)*

Laminated signs for the dishwashing game can be nice. Laminated role cards too. But you don't strictly need them. What you need is to understand the process, the components, and the roles.