

Got Your Number...?

A game about numerical symbolism,
relationship styles, systemic prejudice, and mask-making
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Numbers are among the oldest symbols in continuous use by humans, found everywhere in most modern societies. But how often do we really stop to think about the ways they affect our thinking? Play and find out.

Players in this game create a society of numbers, and then role-play relationships within that society's conventions and stereotypes. This game deals with fictionalized prejudice: playing an odd number is intended to be harder and more "othering" than playing an even number. Playing an irrational or negative number should be even tougher.

To account for the full range of player emotions and reactions, use of safety mechanics such as **Cut** and **OK Check-in** (<https://goo.gl/4Ftztw>) or **Open-Door Policy** (<https://goo.gl/uAz2yL>) is strongly recommended. Each individual group of players should choose at least one. Please play responsibly and with kindness.

What You Will Need:

Five or more players
Blank white masks
Black markers
Color markers, pencils, or crayons
Large adhesive name tags
(Optional) A selection of small pillows

How to Play:

Step 1 - Choose a number.

You may pick one of the numbers below, or another number whose symbolism you know. Alternatively, choose a number below and make it negative (-5) or imaginary ($3i$). Write your number and its House(s) at the top of your name tag, leaving most of the name tag empty to write relationship equations below.

i ($\sqrt{-1}$): imaginary things. the imagination. calculus. Head of the Imaginary House.

Special Ability: i (and all imaginary numbers) can be invisible to non-imaginary numbers. If invisible, cross your fingers and hold them where they are easy to see.

0: nothing. nonduality. no one. darkness. emptiness. void. liberation. The Fool (Tarot). Head of House Zero and every member.

Special ability: 0 can turn other numbers into 0 (see **Rule of Zero**)

1: unity. unification. wholeness. monotheism. winning. being the best. The Magician (Tarot). "the loneliest number." Head of House of 1.

Special ability: 1 can perform marriages (see **Rule of One**).

2: duality, opposites, polarity. good and evil. right and wrong. light and dark. yin and yang. "two's company." "it takes two to tango." Janus. The High Priestess (Tarot). Head of House of 2.

Special ability: 2 can perform divorces (see **Division**).

e (2.71828...): exponential growth. Euler. compound interest. Irrational.

3: triangles. three points determine a plane. The Christian Trinity. The Hindu Trinity. The Triple Goddess. The Furies. The Fates. the third rail. "three's a crowd." The Empress (Tarot). Head of House of 3.

π (3.1415...): circles. Pythagoras. pie. ancient Greece. Darren Aronofsky. Irrational.

4: squares. the four elements. humors. cardinal directions. seasons. winds. The Emperor (Tarot). House of 2.

5: pentacles. the Pentagon. quintessence. The Fifth Element. "fifth wheel." The Hierophant (Tarot). Head of House of 5.
6: number of habits of highly effective people. "sex", in some languages. insects. The Lovers (Tarot). Houses of 2 and 3.
7: chakras. deadly sins. archangels. wisdom. the sabbath. years of bad luck for breaking a mirror. number of days in a week. The Chariot (Tarot). Head of House of 7.
8: spiders. the Eightfold Path. chaos star. compass. Crazy Eights. Number of planets in our solar system. Strength (Tarot). House of 2.
9: Nine Worlds (Norse). Three times three. Number of alignments in D&D. modern number of planets in our solar system. The Hermit (Tarot). House of 3.
10: completion. hands and feet. the entire decimal number system. decimation. the Ten Commandments. The Wheel of Fortune (Tarot). Houses of 2 and 5.
12: 12 signs of the zodiac. the ancient tribes of Israel. apostles and disciples. Olympian gods. the labors of Hercules. Number of months in a year. The Hanged Man (Tarot). Houses of 3 and 4.
13: Unluckiness. Teenagers. Bar / Bat Mitzvahs. Death (Tarot). Head of House of 13.

Step 2 - Create your character.

Consider how the meanings of your number suggest personality traits. Take five minutes to think of three to five adjectives or phrases that describe your number. Make sure a few of these describe flaws, or mistakes your number frequently makes:

- 1 - self-sufficient, oversimplifies things, self-centered, tries to be the best
- 2 - prone to mood swings, "us vs. them", romantic, likes to drive fast

Step 3 - Account for stereotypes.

Even numbers in this society are stereotyped as friendly, agreeable, and helpful.

Odd numbers are stereotyped as eccentric, inconsistent, and unreliable.

Irrational numbers, such as π and e , are stereotyped as unreasonable, unrealistic, and unable to control their emotions. They are neither even nor odd.

Negative numbers are stereotyped as evil, dangerous, and criminal. They may be even or odd, just like positive numbers.

Most numbers consider **imaginary** numbers like i nonexistent or extinct. They may be spooked if they see one. Imaginary numbers are neither even nor odd.

If two numbers share a House, they will usually tend to trust each other and be willing to work together, unless given a good reason not to. Other numbers may be suspect or just fine, but either way, they aren't family.

Optional: Your group may choose to add Pythagorean gender classifications. This would make even numbers female; odd numbers, male; irrational and imaginary numbers, nonbinary.

Regarding the above stereotypes, individual numbers might feel differently, but all characters know these stereotypes exist in society, and have heard them enough times to be able to repeat them.

If the personality traits suggested by your character's number type don't match the ones you chose earlier, your character is (and probably always has been) a target of systemic discrimination. How do they handle it?

Step 4 - Make your mask.

Take ten minutes to decorate it with objects, colors, or designs that you associate with your number or your chosen personality traits. You might draw a car for the number 4, or a spider for the number 8. Your number need not appear on your mask, but feel free to draw it as many ways as you like (Arabic numerals, Roman numerals, dots, binary, hexadecimal, etc). When your mask is finished, wear it.

Step 5 - Introduce your character.

When everyone's mask is complete, form a circle. Take turns introducing your number and describe what the other numbers would know about them. Establish pre-existing friendships or rivalries between numbers, if you like. (See **Addition**, **Subtraction**, and **Multiplication**.)

Step 6 - Begin play with House meetings.

The head of each House determines what happens at each meeting, and when it is concluded. If your number is in multiple Houses, you will have to choose which meeting to be on time for.

Rules for Houses:

1. A House is an extended family or clan. A number's lowest common denominators mark it as part of those numbers' Houses. Numbers may be part of multiple Houses. For example, 9 is part of the **House of 3**, and 12 is of the **Houses of 3 and 4**. Prime numbers are the heads of the Houses bearing their names.
2. Within a House, the number whose name the House carries gets to be in charge. Their sovereignty can only be removed if they become a 0, if they seek adoption into another House, or if they designate another House member to take their place.
3. **Adoption:** Any head of a House may adopt a number of another House, with mutual consent. That number may not remain a member of their current House(s), if any. A newly adopted number may become the child of any House member, with mutual consent.
4. The **House of Zero** equals all characters who are currently numbered 0.
5. The **House of 1** naturally consists of 1 and only 1. Any number who multiplies with 1 is still an in-law, so the House of 1 is the same as 1's collection of mates.
6. The **Imaginary House** consists of all imaginary numbers in play.
7. The **House Council** consists of the heads of every House. It is the closest thing numbers have to a court or legislature.
8. Irrational numbers are members of no House at the beginning of the game, unless already married to a member of that House.

After the house meetings (or right away, if your number is the only member of their House, or has no House), feel free to mingle and interact using the mechanics below.

Social Conventions:

Addition: If your number makes a friend, write the friendship equation gently on each other's name tags (" $4 + 5 = 9$ "). If the result is another number someone is playing, the two must go find that number and ask permission. If that number objects, they must subtract immediately.

Subtraction: Numbers may declare they are no longer friends. To subtract, cross out the addition equation representing the friendship from your name tag.

If you and another number are rivals, subtract the larger number from the smaller number ($5 - 9 = -4$). Write the rivalry equation on your name tag. A number and its opposite (such as 4 and -4) always begin the game as rivals.

Multiplication: Numbers multiply to represent romantic partnership. To multiply, find 1 and ask them to perform a marriage. They may set conditions before performing it. Afterwards, write your numbers and their product on your name tags (" $4 \times 12 = 48$ ").

If your number is monogamous, your name tag should have only one multiplication equation.

For most polyamory, include a separate equation for each of your partners on your name tag.

For polyfidelity or group marriage (triads, quads, etc.), use one equation for the whole polycule, and separate equations for each set of partners that includes your character (" $4 \times 3 \times 2 = 24$ "; " $4 \times 3 = 12$ "; " $4 \times 2 = 8$ ").

If a relationship's product is a player character, that character is the person who first introduced the members of the relationship.

If not, the product will be the name of their child, should they choose to have one. You may use a pillow up the front of a shirt to represent pregnancy. You may choose to have twins (two pillows) if your product has two digits, or triplets (three pillows) if your product has three. For twins or triplets, each child's name is one digit.

Division: To dissolve most relationships, find 2 and ask them to give you a divorce. They may set conditions before performing it. Then cross out the relationship's equation on your name tag.

For triads, quads, etc., get a divorce from the number equal to the number of characters in your relationship. Otherwise, the rules are the same as if 2 performed it.

The Rule of Zero: Any number who multiplies with 0 becomes 0 also. If you want to become someone new, find 0 and chant together, "Nothing, nothing, we are nothing!" Cross out your number from your name tag, replacing it with 0. This change is permanent and irreversible. Everyone who is currently a 0 may do this.

The Rule of One: Those multiplying with 1 cannot be divided, as 1 is unity, and any number multiplied by 1 is itself. 1 does not believe in division, because 1 will not give up on unity, ever. That's also why 1 performs marriage ceremonies.

Conflict Resolution: If two numbers are unable or unwilling to settle a dispute through roleplay, add the results of all equations on their name tags. Equations involving imaginary numbers may not be counted. The number with the higher total wins. A number who is unsatisfied with this result may contest it by asking the Council of Houses to meet and hear their case.

The Game Ends When:

1. Everyone has collected and/or wrecked as many family, friend, and romantic relationships as they care to ("the Drama Llamas Ending"); or
2. Everyone has formed a single chain of relationships that includes everyone in at least one friendship or romance ("the Six Degrees Ending"); or
3. Everyone is married to 1, and/or everyone has become a 0 ("the Borg Ending").

Inspirations

Sesame Street; Schoolhouse Rock; Flatland by Edwin A. Abbott; Opening Up by Tristan Taormino; More Than Two by Eve Rickert.

Special thanks to Sara Mastros for suggesting the inclusion of irrational numbers and Pythagorean gender classifications, and for checking my math concepts for accuracy.