

At Infinity

A game about living a parallel life with another - interacting with the same people, even often having mutual friends, yet impacting each other's lives only ever indirectly. For 2+ players, About 2-4 hours.

Supplies:

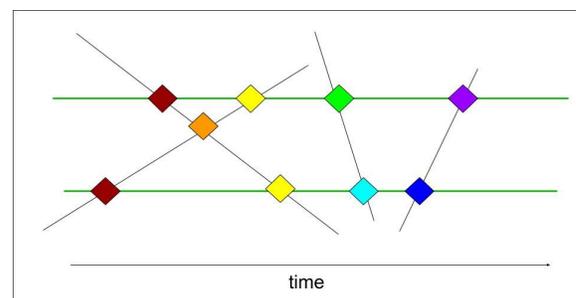
- Paper (multiple pieces). With a larger number of players, an additional single large sheet of paper is recommended but not necessary.
- A hat or bag or something of the like
- Writing utensils, ideally in colors
- Straight edge (optional but useful)

Safety: Make sure that all players introduce themselves with both name and pronouns to the group. *At Infinity* uses Lines/Veils, Cut/Brake, and The Door is Open as safety mechanisms. These should be reviewed with players before anything else is started. Summaries and resources on their mechanisms can be found at <https://www.bigbadcon.com/safety-mechanisms/>. For the purposes of this game, all "violence" if it comes out must be in slow motion, decided by the target of the attack instead of the aggressor.

Prep: Read the introductory line. Discuss with your group what kind of stories you want to tell. *At Infinity* was designed for realistic fiction, but by no means is limited to the genre. However, due to the nature of the game, I would recommend leaning towards a smaller story over a Godslaying epic. As you will all be telling stories from the same world, define a few things about the world and write them down on a piece of paper. These details should include both a few broad and specific ideas. A second sheet of paper will serve as your diagram.

Certain terms are used in this game interchangeably. Parallel lines, or lines that do not meet at any definite point, are part of a parallel pair. Each line is representative of a character and may just be referred to as such. Each intersection is representative of an interaction and treated in the same manner.

Draw straight lines on a paper, with the following constraints. Make sure at least two lines are parallel. If you are using color, each set of parallel lines should be their own unique color. All non-parallel lines should also be a unique color, uniform for all non-parallel lines. Time moves across the long length of the page, so for ease of play, avoid the use of vertical lines. Each line should have at least two interactions, or intersections, and more than two lines can meet at a point. All parallel lines should have at least four interactions, with at least two ascending and descending, independently. Make sure there is at



This is a sample diagram of what your story may look like. The two green lines are parallel characters, while all black lines lack a parallel partner. For ease of reading, the interactions have been noted and color coded for which can be run at the same time. In this case, with six characters, there will be a total of seven play rounds, or seven canon scenes.

least a minimum of six lines on the diagram or a minimum of lines equal to players, whichever is greater.

Each line is a representative of a character and their transversal through their timeline. The points where the lines meet are notable interactions which in some way define the relationship between the two characters. Assign a line to each player, noting that time will move linearly across the long side of the page, so longer lines will be more consistent characters during play than shorter lines. The assigning of parallel lines should take priority over other lines. After, each player is assigned a line that will be their own personal character, any remaining lines may be divided by scene and assigned at this point or at a later point in play.

Assign a foundational trait to each line, which is a way the character is seen in the world. All parallel lines should have at least one trait in common between the two characters. These traits can include, but are not limited to personality traits (e.g. temperamental or compassionate), a career (e.g. accountants or opera singers), or, in the case of parallel lines, a relationship (e.g. long-lost siblings).

Take a piece of paper and cut or tear it into smaller pieces, large enough to write a note on to. On each paper, write some a prompt for a scene. It can be a location, an event, an interaction - anything you think will inspire meaningful play. Try to create a mixture of both broad and specific prompts when writing down ideas. Fold the pieces so the prompts cannot be seen and fill the hat the best of your ability (a minimum of scene prompts equal to the total interactions on the created map plus 4).

Define some things about each character that are known publicly, such as their name, perhaps a bit of a description and some noticeable character tendencies. Each player should also take some time to think about a few formative relationships, such as how did their parents interact with each other, how did their character get along with their parents, or what was their first friendship like and how long did it last.

Finally, take time to arrange the scenes of those which can be played through at the same time. Each of these groupings is a "canon scene". Depending on the number of canon scenes, determine how long you want each scene to be. For smaller groups, like the one presented, I recommend about 15 minutes of play while for larger groups, keep around 10 minutes for a canon scene.

Gameplay: Divide into canon scenes and pull from the hat to inspire the scene. Divide into groups accordingly. Feel free to take your time describing the scene you are playing in. Try to play to the emotional core of the scene. Each interaction played out appears on the diagram to be the only interaction between two characters. This may or may not be the case. What is significant is that this is the interaction that defines the relationship between the two - the interaction that rushes to memory in hindsight. If for any reason a player has no determined interaction for the play round, the player may play a minor character in any of the active scenes. For example, if in one of the scenes the players are at a boxing match, other minor players may

be acting out the boxing match itself. When the scene completes, review the chart and begin again.

Note: In this game, time is linear but the experience isn't incremental. Feel free to disregard the appearance of the length of time between two interactions. As long as they occur in the written order for the character, the exact amount of time that has passed is up to player discretion.

With most characters who interact with one member of a parallel pair, they will also interact with the other. If you are in that second scene, there must be some mention of the prior character in your discussion. It can be a minor point or it can be rather significant in your conversation, whatever feels most appropriate. For example, you might say that the character you are with reminds you of another friend, and then describe what you see a little. Or you may be talking about a hospitalization you had and how this other person is how you got through it. Give enough that the other player gets a taste of this character they will not meet.

You may discover about or need something from the world in play. When adding something that has not been established prior to the world in play, try to connect it to a character, including yourself, in the scene and provide information so the other player can choose how to react. For example, "When my mom died last year, I would not have known what do you without you." At the end of the scene, make a note on the paper with the rest of the world notes. When reorganizing for the next round, tell everyone what came up and was added.

When all the scenes have been played out, regroup and take some time to recount your experiences. The parallel characters should describe their counterpart with the knowledge they've gathered. Allow them to get their thoughts out for any other player provides input. Take a moment to reflect on the interactions you've had in play.

Derolling: Derolling is a very important part of safe play. The characters may deal with similar situations that we do in real life but we are not the characters and the characters are not us. Have each player reintroduce themselves to the group along with their pronouns. Then, have the player say at least one thing they find important about themselves and describe an important relationship that they have with another in real life, ideally one the character they played would not have.

Notes from the Designer:

Euclid is often considered the father of modern Geometry, as in his *Elements*, he systematically built and proved all spacial relationships with the exception of one thing: the Fifth Postulate. Despite never mentioning the nature of parallel lines, it was assumed that parallel lines never meet. Non-Euclidean math, the main influence for *At Infinity*, removes this assumption ingrained by the Fifth Postulate and, instead, takes the position that parallel lines do meet but only at infinity. While not designed to be a paradox, the statement that parallel lines meet (at infinity) very much sounds like one, as infinity is a difficult concept for humans who live in an experience with a finite beginning and end to comprehend. Non-Euclidean math is never described as obvious, even by the authors. It is a mind-bending subject and through the metaphor of our

experiences, perhaps the subject becomes more transparent, or at least fun to think about, because math at its root, even to Euclid, is a theoretical puzzle for the mind.

Humans experience time as a one-directional line. There is a hard chronological order to our existence, yet the way we experience that order isn't in such a clean fashion as the theoretical timelines we often see writers design. Times of enjoyment go faster. Times of sorrow seem to drag. We have imperfect memory which can complicate our experience of time in innumerable ways. In living our lives, we affect those around us and leave pieces of ourselves in their heads. Through our mutual experiences, humans have created our own infinity or immortality in the stories of people we pass on, making the person last longer than our experiences with them and possibly onto new generations.

Most people relate to the experience of knowing that there is someone important or significant to the people around them and yet never meet that mysterious enigma themselves. But, when we say we never met the other but is that a true statement? Typically, we have a definition of meeting a person only by direct interaction, but that is a statement we hold as true and rarely question, similarly to the Fifth Postulate. Sometimes, we are much more affected by another person through indirect actions than someone we have interacted with directly. Have we still not met that other person? One might ask is there anything more we can ever know of a person other than their actions?

The subject of Relativity is also influential to the game, seen in reference to time throughout. Presented originally by Albert Einstein, Relativity introduces that time is accepted as a constant but, in reality, is a variable affected by its literal velocity, a theory proven by clocks at the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Boulder, Colorado. For the purposes of the game, I took a more artistic take of Relativity but the concepts served as guidance.

Influential Texts: Euclid's *Elements*, Einstein's *The Principle of Relativity*, Lobachevsky's *Theory of Parallels*

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