

# LEAVE OR STAY

A freeform LARP about nostalgia and how places change  
Design by Francesco Rugerfred Sedda, Beatrice Sgaravatto, and Francesco Zani  
8-20 Players | 2 Hour



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## Premise

In **Leave or Stay** players take the role of people from the same town or city. Some of these people left a while ago but are now back, some of them never left. During the game you will have a series of discussions with the other players dealing with how each of you perceives the town and your role in it now that it's changed.

In order to play you need from 8 to 20 players, ideally from different age groups, the printed handouts, a name tag for each of the players, writing tools and about 2 hours of time. Everybody should either read or familiarize with the **Safety** and **Playing the Game** chapters before the game, so that everybody can both enjoy the game without stressing about not knowing what to do or explaining the rules during the game itself.

## Safety

Leave or Stay deals with a quiet reflection on melancholy, change, nostalgia and the sense of estrangement linked to ones hometown. Some of the discussions you will have during the game might touch something that you prefer not to deal with or talk about: that's ok, you always have the possibility to leave a discussion and go back to the centre of the room (that will function as a sort of game hub). You don't owe an explanation, just tell the other player that you have "**something else to do**" to end it now and they will understand. Also remember that if, for whatever reason, you prefer to walk away from the game entirely, that's also ok too, just let the other players know that that is the case.

## Workshop (40 minutes)

### Group synergy (5 minutes)

Before playing the game, the players should do this two quick workshop exercises aimed at building a synergic group:

1. Form a circle. Starting from the oldest player saying the word "*City*" and going clockwise, everyone must say a word connected with the previous one. Continue for two rounds.
2. Form a circle and take hands. Going clockwise, they can say "*Left*", "*Right*", "*Forward*", or "*Backward*" and everyone must move in that direction. Continue for two rounds.

### Character and town creation (35 minutes)

In order to create your characters and the town you will play a small mingling exercise. Each of these phases should last no more than 5 minutes. Whatever you establish about your character during character creation should be summarised on your name tag.

When asked to create a Place, you should pick something as a group inspired by the suggested Theme but refrain from discussing how the Place changed in time until specified. Try to make it so that it is possible for everybody to visit that location (it shouldn't be private but something of possible relevance for everybody).

**Age:** decide the age of your characters. The only limitation is an age of 18 years old, we want characters that lived the town for a while and that could have left for a while. When everybody has

chosen their age, arrange yourselves, based on the age of your character, from youngest to oldest in a circle at the center of the room. The players with the youngest and the oldest character will be close to each other.

*Family:* form some small groups of 3 or 4. This is your family, briefly discuss who is who in the family and something about your relationships, affects, and bits of memories. Each group should create a place for the town. Then go back to the circle.

*Work:* form some small groups of 3 or 4. These are your colleagues or school classmates, briefly discuss your relationships, affects, and bits of memories. Each group should create a place for the town. Then go back to the circle.

*Friends:* form some small groups of 3 or 4. These are your friends, briefly discuss your relationships, affects, and bits of memories. Each group should create a place for the town. Then go back to the circle.

*Left/Stayed:* form 2 groups of about the same number of people. Determine which of the 2 groups is the one with the people who left and which one is the one with the people who stayed.

- If you *stayed*, take all the Places you created in the Family, Work, and Friends groups and discuss for each location some details about how it changed, taking inspiration from the theme written on each of them. Then distribute them on the ground around the room leaving a lot of space in the centre of the room. Put the Square handout at the centre of the room. Then go back to the circle.
- If you have *left* think about why you might be back in the city. Also briefly discuss what were your experiences away from it. Then go back to the circle.

## Playing the game (80 minutes)

The flow of the game is divided into different **Square** and **Discussion** phases. Each of you will play five discussions with one or two other players and an equal number of square phases with everybody else. The sum of a square phase and a discussion phase is called a round.

### Square phase

The game, and each following round, starts in the Square. Everybody will walk around the centre of the room. Engage each other with some small talk and asking questions.

The questions should be about what you did in the last months or years, about how the Places changed, about what you missed from each other, about memories and stories of the past or about the curiosity for the present, about people you haven't seen in a long time and where they ended up, about what you haven't yet shared with each other and about what you miss from the past, etc...

Only small talk and questions are allowed in this phase, no complex themes. If you choose to give an answer make it vague and generic, this is not the time to open yourself. When you agree with one or two players that you have a good set of questions that could be interesting to answer then you can move on to the next step, the Discussion phase. During the first round choose someone that Stayed if you Left and vice versa.

When you have found someone you can move to one of the places in the town. You should always choose a Place that is not occupied by another group of players: aside from this, choice is up to you.

### **Discussion phase**

During the Discussion phase you have the opportunity to explore the answers to the questions you asked during the Square Phase and to explore the Place you chose, the relationship between your characters and their experiences.

Starting when no more players are in the Square you can choose to bring the Discussion phase to an end: you will need to complete one of the polaroids on the place handout with a drawing or text. This contribution should represent something that you, as a group having the discussion, feel represents this place now or in the past, essentially writing a piece of its history. As soon as you have completed the polaroid you should go back to the Square and small talk until everybody is back. If someone else goes back to the Square before you, hurry up: don't spend more than another 5 minutes on the current Discussion Phase.

When everyone is back to the Square, start a new Square phase. After the fifth round you can move on to the epilogue.

## **Principles**

### **1 - Think about how the town speak to you personally**

When playing the scenes, try to describe what the location you're visiting convey to your character. Which aspects or memories of the place make your character think or feel? Try to include in your conversations how the places speak to your character. What triggered your interest in that specific location in the first place?

### **2 - Think about the future**

Remember to think about the future of your character. It is not the aim of this game to discover specifically what happen in the future of the characters, but thinking about it will enrich the experience and it can help you in the dialogue with the other characters.

### **3 - Focus on the experience, more than on the story**

Don't force yourself to create a discussion built upon a chain of memories following one another, but use the scenario to explore your emotions. Think about what is nostalgia for you and how this correlate with the town. When you're visiting a location with other characters, think about your relationship: which kind of experiences you had in the past? Regardless of whether you left the city or not, how this changed you?

### **4 - Do it together**

Everybody should be able to contribute to the game with their own experience. You should put some effort into portraying diversity and diverse point of views. Build the places together, not against each other. Cooperate and lift the other players whenever possible. There's no prevalent narrator and there should never be. Always make the other player's characters shine: if you do, you will both have a better experience.

## Epilogue

After five rounds are up the game should come to an end. Gather in a circle around the Square and, with your eyes closed, think about these questions:

- ❖ Which kind of happy memories you had about the place? Are these memories still happy?
- ❖ Which kind of sad memories you had about the place? Are these memories still sad?
- ❖ What do you like or hate about your town and about how it changed?

When you think you have found your personal answers, don't break the silence yet, but open your eyes.

When everybody opens their eyes, starting from the first player to have opened their eyes take turns clockwise deciding:

- ❖ If you want to leave, for whatever reason, say "**I will leave**".
- ❖ If you want to stay, for whatever reason, say "**I will stay**".

## Debriefing

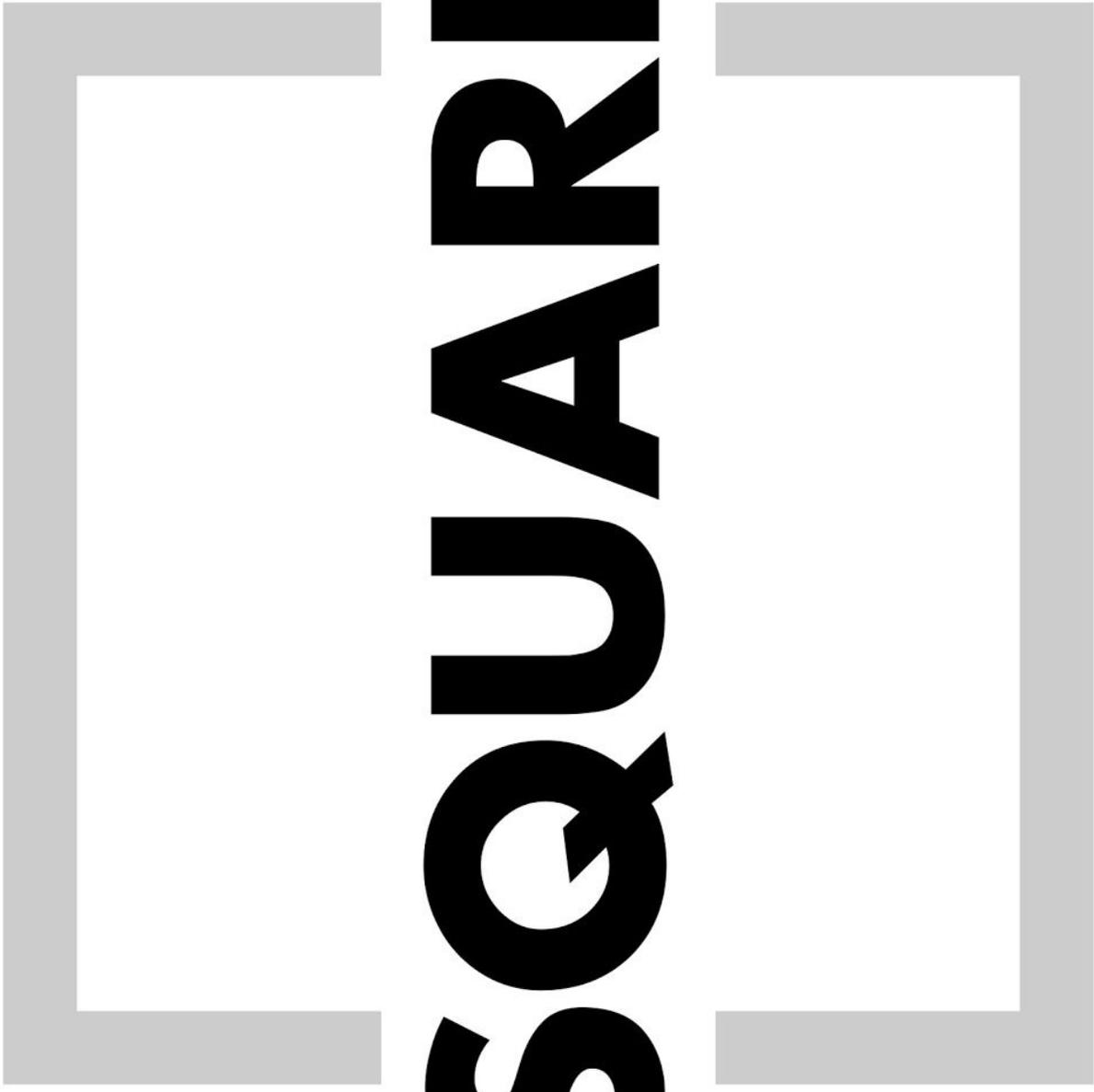
After the epilogue, take some time to think. Then form the circle for a last time: now you can take your time to discuss about your characters, how they behaved and how they changed during the game. You could talk about their epilogue decision describing the reasons behind your choice to make them leave or stay. Feel free to express anything you like about your character or yourself in relation to the game.

## Credits, Inspirations and Designer notes

A big thanks to Dario Narhijan and Giorgia Menozzi for the first proofreading of this ruleset.

Inspirations:

- ❖ Atlanta (TV Series)
- ❖ Murubutu - Zefiro (Song)
- ❖ Night in the Woods (Videogame)



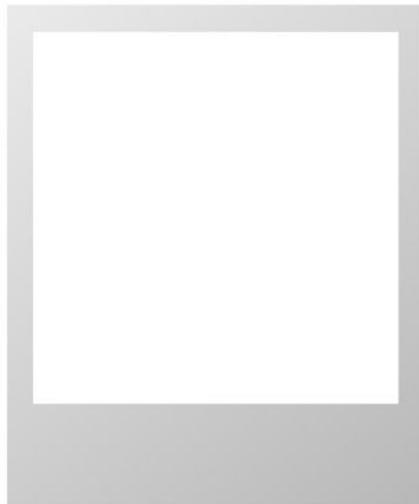
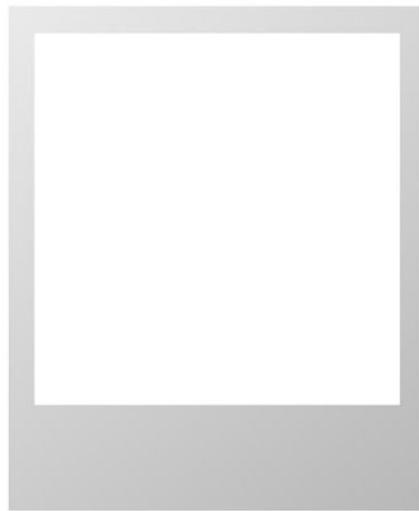
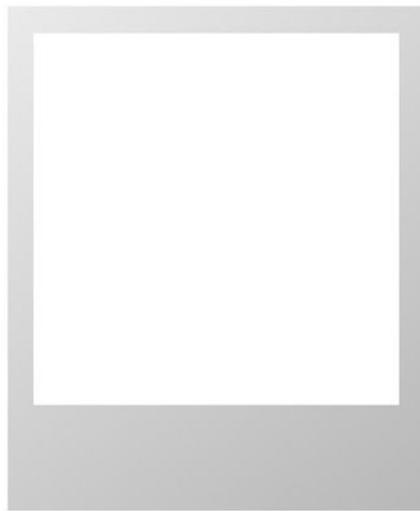
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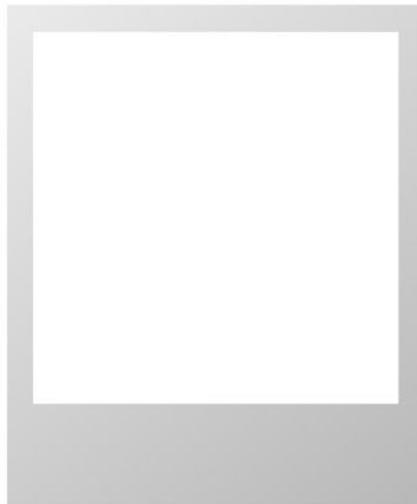
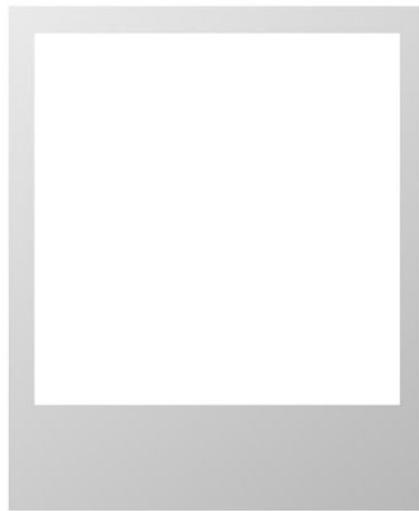
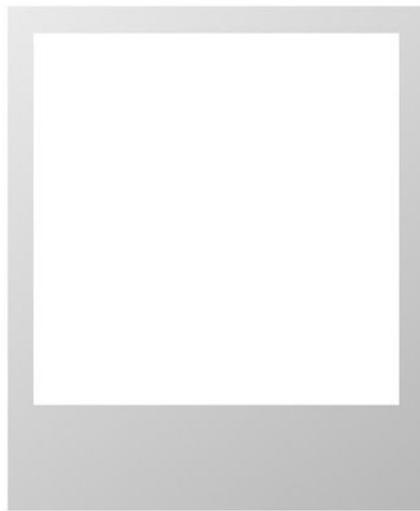


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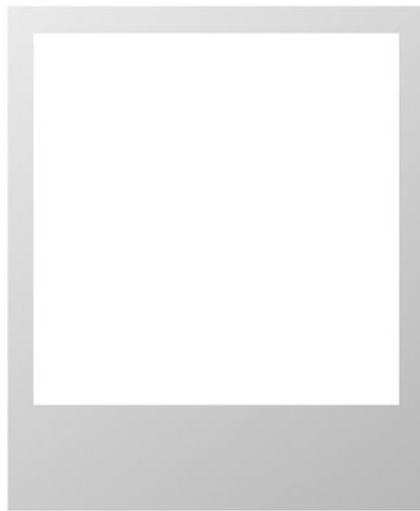


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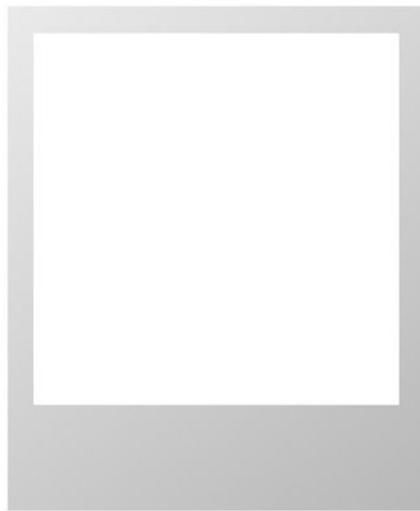
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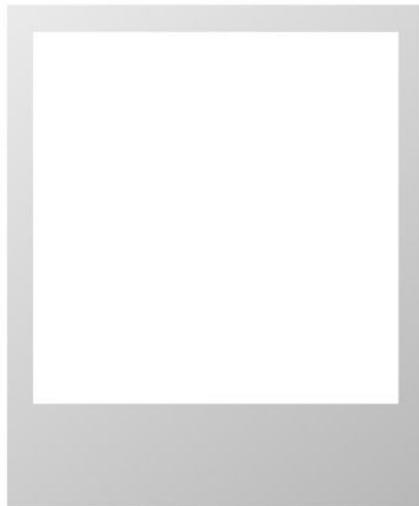
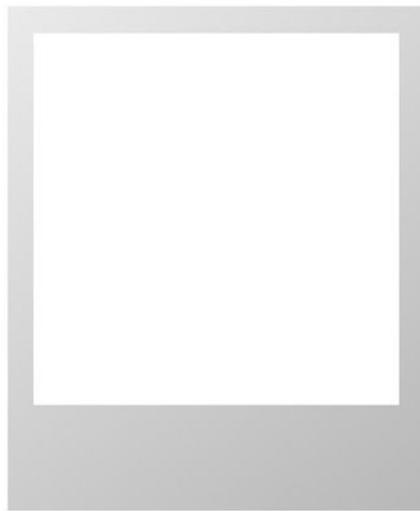


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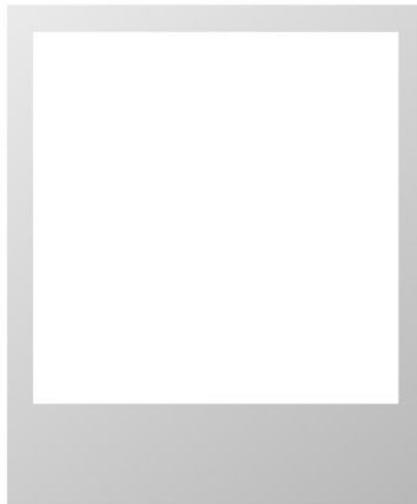
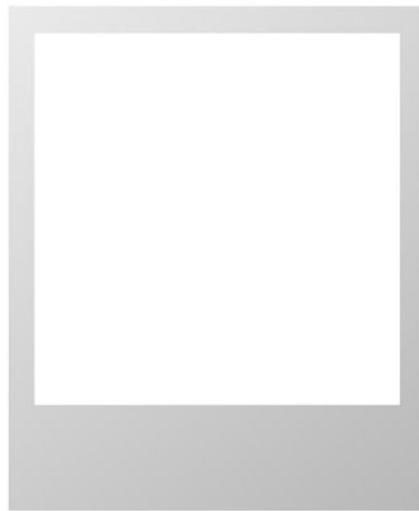
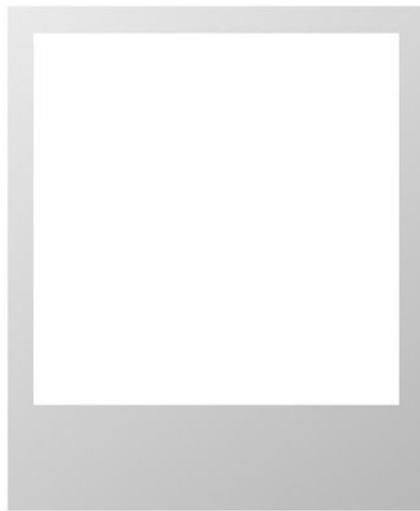


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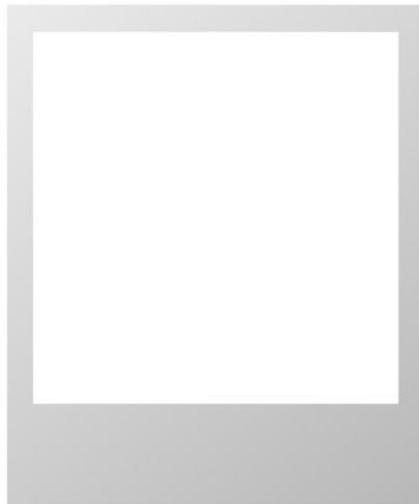
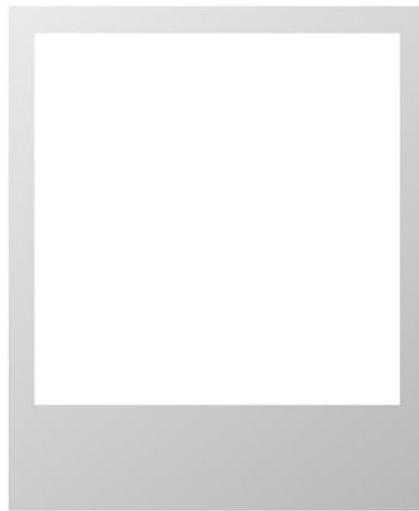
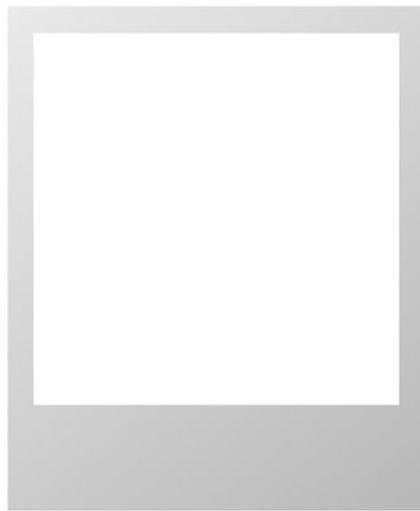
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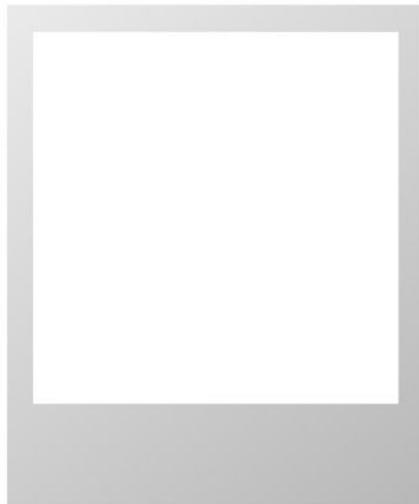
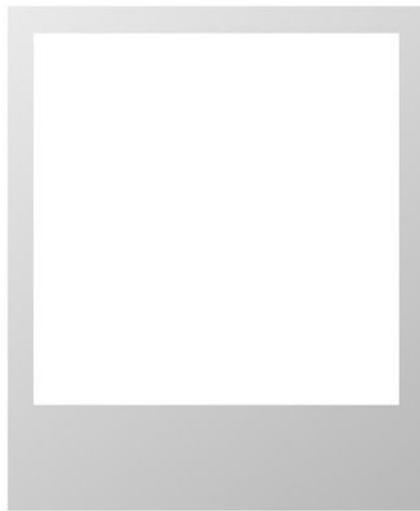
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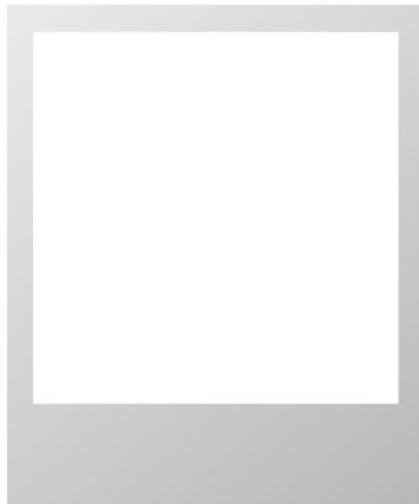
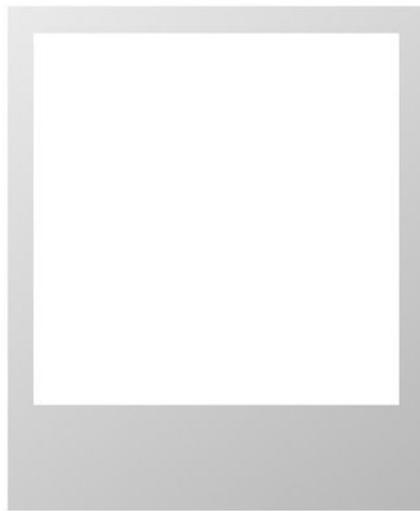


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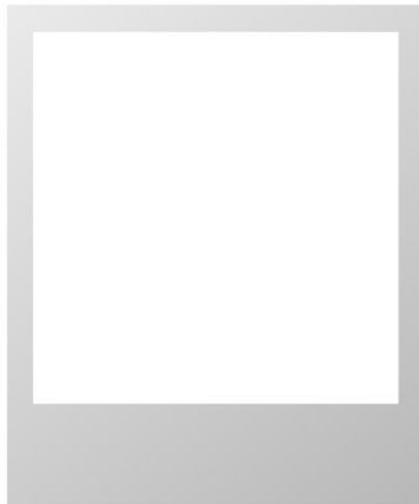
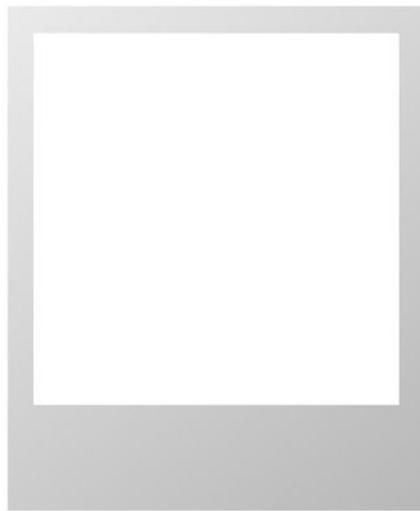


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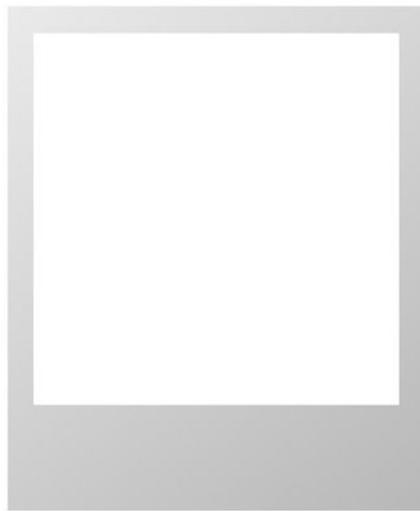
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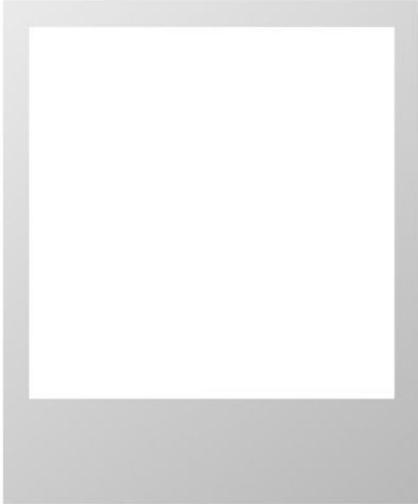
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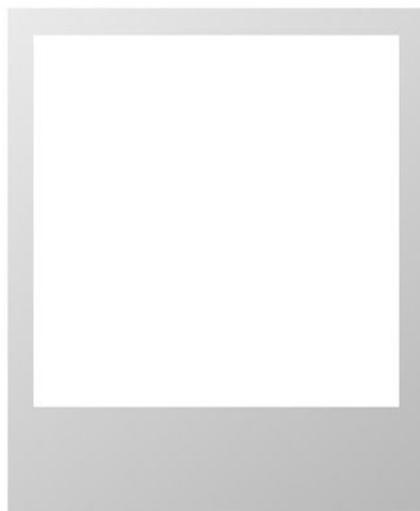


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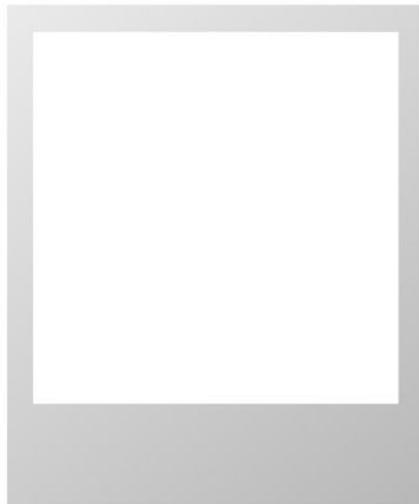
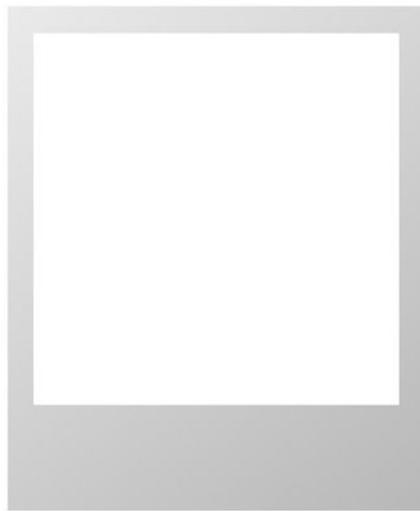


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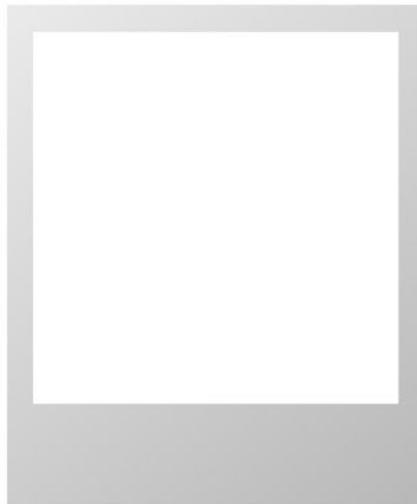
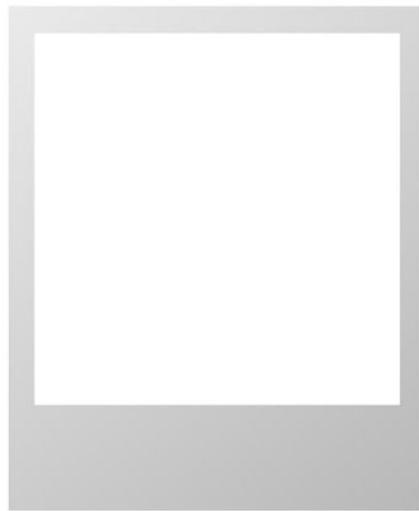
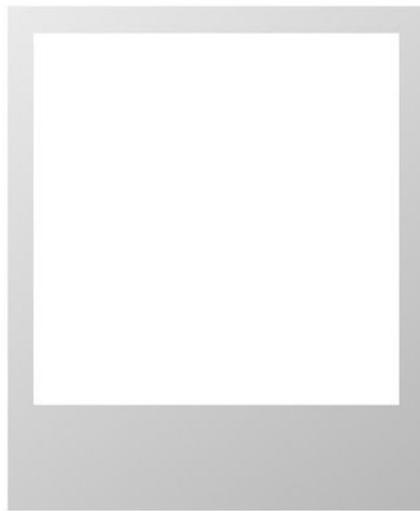


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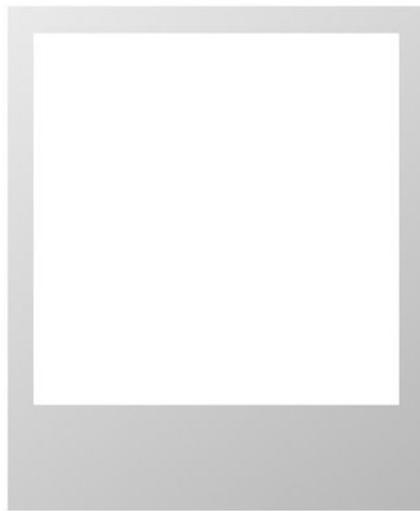


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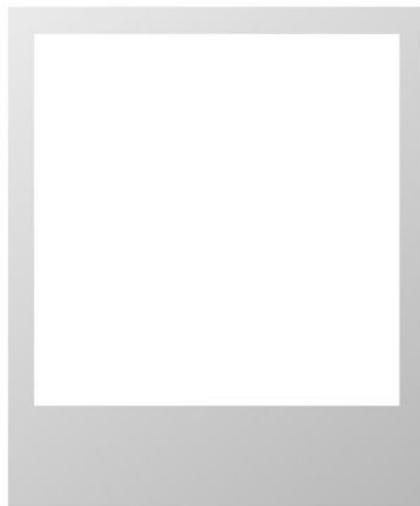


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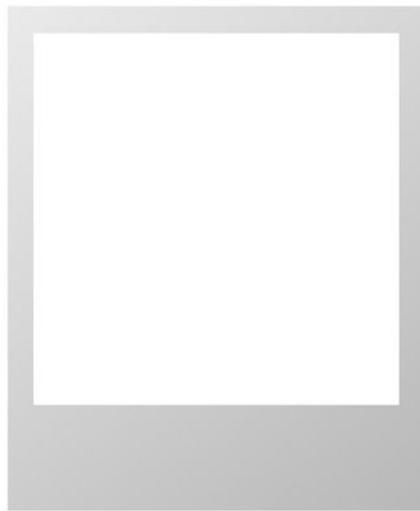


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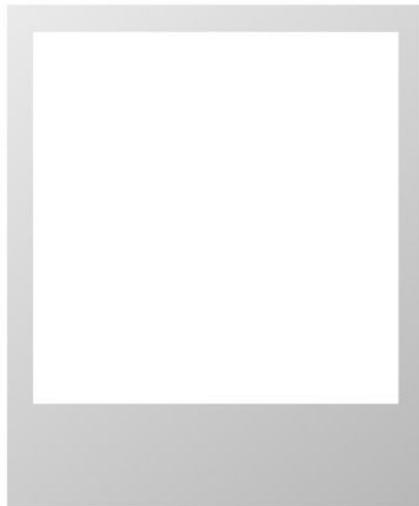
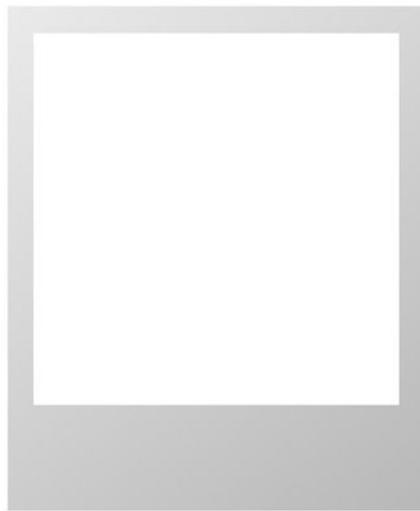
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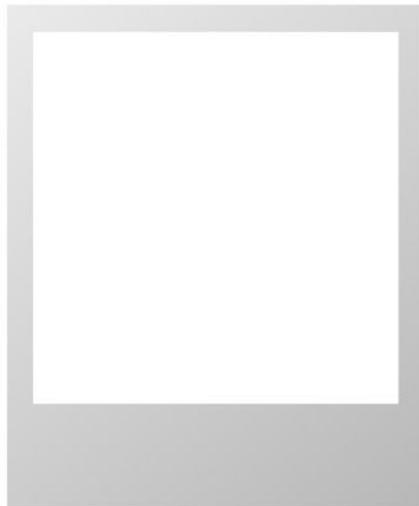
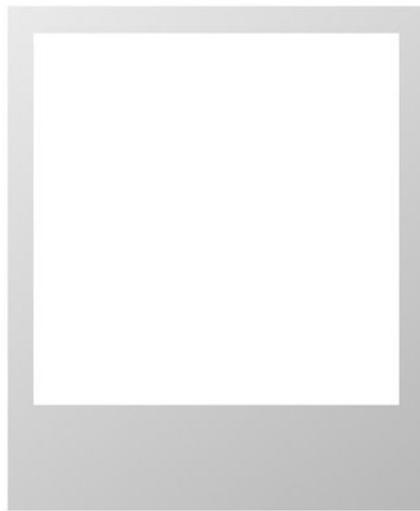


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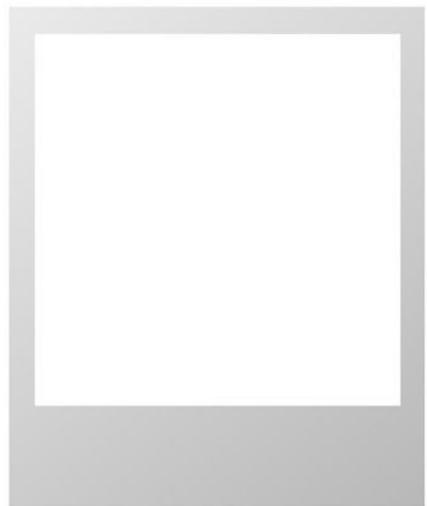
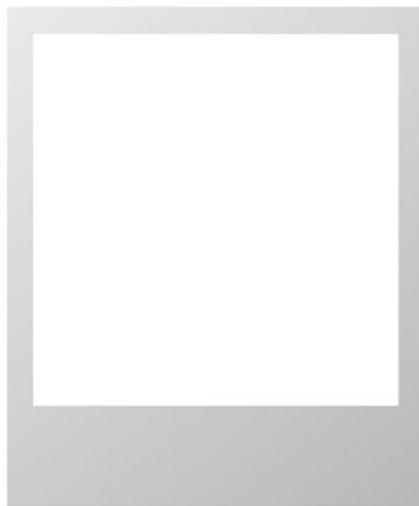
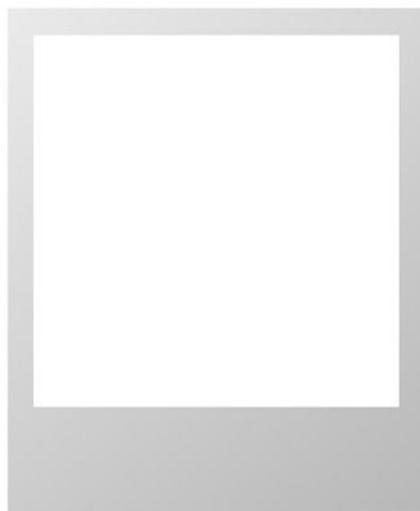
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