

Time to Leave

by Ian Howard

4+ Players, 10-20 minutes

About

Time to Leave is a role-playing game for 4 or more players. It recreates the closing moments of a gathering, when some attendees are preparing to leave and others attempt to keep the gathering going. All players will collaborate equally, discovering the story of their characters and the setting over the course of a single play session.

Setup

Assign players to roles: each player must be either a Leave or a Stay and there should be at least 2 Leave players. These roles may be given to players randomly or by player preference.

After all roles are assigned, any player may begin the game by offering up a commonplace statement or question. The less concrete information, the better.

Examples

- “Some weather we’re having.”
- “It’s been a lovely evening.”
- “Did you hear what happened to my neighbor?”

Playing

There are no set turns, but only one player should speak at a time. A player will take on a single character, and may use their speaking time to add additional information about their character, the general setting, or the gathering through the voice of their character (“Yes, the ion storms have played havoc with my neuroware”). All information offered over the course of the game is considered truthful, even if it does not initially match with previously gleaned information. Players are free to write notes on their cards to help them remember important details; they may also remind or question each other if needed.



Leaving

Whenever a player with the Leave role speaks, they may also announce that they are Leaving. To do so, they must offer a parting line that explains or excuses their departure, such as “I must be going; I’ve got an early appointment with the lords.”

When a player has announced that they are Leaving, they must do so unless a player with the Stay role offers them a reason to Stay: for example, “You have plenty of time: the lords are rarely up before the moon.”

Both the announcement of Leaving and any requests to Stay **must** include some new piece of information about the setting, the characters, or the gathering itself.

If someone has asked them to Stay, the Leaving player must decide whether to continue with their intent to Leave. Players who Leave must be silent for the remainder of the game.

The player may instead Delay their exit, though they move one step closer to leaving.

- If they are seated, they stand.
- If they are standing, they touch the door.
- If they are touching the door, they abandon the idea of Leaving and become a Stay.

For online play, players may use one or more of the following actions instead.

- Instead of standing, close your eyes..
- Instead of touching the door, turn off the camera.
- Instead of falling silent, turn off your microphone.

Deciding Fates

Once all Leave players have either Left or Stayed, each player will take a turn to narrate the Fate of their character following the gathering.

The first to Leave narrates a single sentence, plus one for each time they Delayed. Their Fate may be positive or negative. This is the trade-off for leaving the gathering early.

Any subsequent player to successfully Leave *receives* a single sentence, plus one for each time they Delayed. These sentences are created collaboratively by the Stay players and must be clearly negative for the Leaving character. This is the penalty for waiting too late.

The remaining Stay players, including any former Leave players, receive a single sentence each. These may be positive or negative and are created by any players who successfully Left.

To tarry is to invite calamity. If all players Stay, the worst has come. Each player must narrate a single sentence for themselves, and it must be worse than death.

