Con·ven·tion·eer·ing

A freeform game of impromptu conversations with strangers

Introduction

Conventioneering is a satirical pick-up-and-play freeform game in which 2 to 8 players take on the role of strangers discussing various topics while waiting in line to an event, or unwinding in the lobby of their hotel after a long day at the con.

It was created by Thomas Gallecier for the **Golden Cobra Challenge** between October 1st - 30th, 2014. You can learn more about this game design contest and freeform games here: http://www.goldencobra.org/

Overview

At the start of the game, players create the **convention** their characters are attending by filling the **program**. Then, each player grabs a **badge** and creates their character. Finally, players engage in different conversations in which they talk and act as their characters in order to earn points. At the end, the player(s) with the most points win.

Preparation

In order to play, you will need to have read the rules.

You will also need to print a **Program** sheet, the **Reference** sheet, and enough **badges** to accommodate all the players (print a few extra just in case, players can create new characters during the game). You will find the **program, badges** and **reference** sheet at the end of this document.

Make sure you have **pens** or **pencils** handy too. One for each player, if possible, as players will need to keep track of their score on the back of their badge.

Find a location

Find a place that is quiet and comfortable enough to accommodate all the players and get situated.

For example: your living room, a cozy area in a hotel lobby, your local game store, a coffee shop or a Noodles & Company or a Steak 'n Shake restaurant near you.

Note: It is highly encouraged to play this game in public as long as all participants are comfortable doing so.

Grab a few props: a smartphone, a cup of coffee, couch pillows, a magazine, business cards, a pen and a notepad, your favorite card game, a comic book, a fake mustache, a pair of sunglasses, make-up, a hat, etc.

How to play

1-Convention Creation

Players, gather 'round.
Together, take a moment to talk about what kind of convention your characters are attending.

- **Where** is it happening?
- **When** is it happening?
- What kind of **things** can you find there?
- What kind of **people** go to this convention?

You might decide to play as attendees at an existing convention in the past or future (Comic Con 1998, Gen Con 2022), or maybe you simply want to pretend that you are at a convention that is happening right now but 500 miles away? Or maybe you want to create a completely fictional convention? It is up to you.

Note: It does not have to be a gaming convention either. There are plenty of conventions out there. It is best if you pick a topic that everybody is familiar with.

Discuss, and fill in all the information on the **program**.

Name: this is the name of your convention. If it's a fictional one, try _____*Con,* or _____*Expo.* It seems to be a popular choice. Come up with a cool sounding name.

Time: this is when your convention happens. Write down the year at least. You don't have to be too specific.

Place: this is where your convention happens: a city, a specific convention center, etc.

The Buzz: this is a list of the cool things that everybody is talking about at the convention. Did something just got announced? or released? What is getting people excited? What is the *hotness*?

The elements on the Buzz list will be used as topics by the players to start a conversation, spur an argument, find commonalities between characters, etc. The game ends once 5 topics have been discussed.

Note: For a shorter game, you can agree to end the game after 3 topics have been discussed.

Create and write down **6 topics**. New topics can arise during the game, in which case you will add them to the program. When a topic is discussed, add a checkmark next to it on the sheet to keep track of what topics have already been discussed.

Define your **location** (i.e. where the players are playing this game) in relation to the convention. Is it a lounge area inside the convention center? a hotel lobby right next door? a hallway? a café? etc.

2- Character Creation

Give a **badge** to each player. Each player grabs a pen and fills in the information on their **badge.** The characters must remain secret until the discussion starts.

Front of the badge:

Convention: the name of the convention you are attending.
Name: your character's name.

Back of the badge:

Home: where your character comes from, nationality, etc.
Age: your character's age.
Occupation: you may add your character's job here if you want.
Contributions: this is where you keep track of your score, by adding a checkmark in the proper box.

The **Contributions** are also listed on the reference sheet. The contributions with a * can only be fulfilled once (see **3- Discussion** for more details about the different contributions).

Take a minute or two to picture your character, think about what they like or dislike, what type of personality they have, where they come from and how they got here. Close your eyes if you think it helps you.

3- Discussion

Now you are ready to impersonate your character, meet strangers and contribute to the discussion.

If this is your first game, remember to:

- **Be attentive:** listen to what people are saying, be flexible, let everybody talk.
- **Be proactive:** initiate conversations, come up with elements, stories, anecdotes, characters that the other players can reuse or react to.
- **Be reactive:** reincorporate any element the other players have mentioned, make things up if you don't know the answer.
- **Help others shine:** ask questions, let them be in the spotlight for a moment, don't be a d*ck unless you're playing one.
- **Always act in character:** no out-of-character talk is allowed but you can take a break or pause the game (cf. **4- Breaks & Pauses**)

Act out the discussion with the other players as you think it would happen. If multiple conversations occur at the same time, that's okay. If people decide to play a card game while talking and getting to know each other that's alright too.

Remember that contributing to the discussion is how you earn points. Every time you contribute, add a checkmark on the back of your badge.

There are the main ways you can contribute to the discussion:

- **Introducing yourself:** There is no right or wrong way to do this. You might want to sit back for a moment and wait for the perfect opportunity, or you might want to jump in right away. It is up to you… unless somebody asks you who you are.

- **Mentioning something you like:** Talk about something you saw at the convention that you really liked. Use the elements listed on the program as inspiration. Your character is defined by the things he or she likes. See how others respond to what you say.

- **Mentioning something you dislike:** Talk about something you saw at the convention that you hated. See how others respond. Use the elements listed on the program as inspiration. Your character is also defined by the things he or she does not like. See how others respond to what you say.

- **Agreeing with another character:** Agree with what another character said and add something meaningful to the discussion (your own opinion, a related anecdote, introduce a new element, etc). See how others respond to what you say.

- **Becoming the Devil's Advocate:** Disagree with something another character just said. You can truly disagree with what they said because of what your character believes, or you might just want to start a lively argument about things you care about.

- **Mentioning somebody you have met recently:** Talk about somebody you have met at the convention. Describe how it happened and how this encounter changed you. See how others respond to what you say.

- **Inquiring about something you don't know about:** Maybe you did not understand what somebody said, maybe you do not know what they are talking about. Ask them to explain to you what they mean. Listen to what they say.

- **Asking a character about something personal:** You can talk and argue about the things you love, hate and the things you have seen at the convention, but sometimes you might want to know more about a specific character. Ask them what you want and listen to what they have to say.

- **Retiring a character:** Whether or not you have already collected any points, you can choose to retire your character. Get up and bid everybody goodbye.

You can choose to retire a character because:
- you are tired of playing the same character
- you want to try something different, something more interesting.
- you are tired of playing this game

Note: If you retire your character, you are out of the game unless you create a new character to re-enter the discussion (cf. **Bringing a new character**). You do not have to do this right away: you can take a short break first if you want.

*Note: After you retire a character, keep your **badge** nearby; you will need it to count your points at the end of the game.*

- **Bringing in a new character:** After you retire a character, grab a new **badge** and join the discussion as someone else. Maybe this time, your character is related to another player's character, or maybe he or she is somebody that was mentioned previously during the discussion.

Note: Keep your characters' badges even after they retire. You will need the badges at the end to calculate your final score.

4- Breaks & Pauses

Players can get up and leave the location at any moment to **take a break**: go to the bathroom; get a cup of coffee, answer a phone call, etc. In this case, just excuse yourself to the rest of the group. You do not have to stay in-character until you come back to the game location.

At any point, a player can clap twice to **pause the game**. When the game is paused, the discussion stops for a moment.

A player may pause the game to:
- ask a question regarding the rules.
- make a suggestion to keep the discussion on track, to get things moving.
- discuss and resolve an inconsistency that emerged during the discussion.
- ask the other players if they want to take a collective break or end the game prematurely.

Otherwise, act in-character or **take a break.**

5- End Game

Once 5 topics have been discussed. The endgame begins.
Players wrap up the game by retiring their current characters one by one.

Then, the game ends and players calculate their scores.

Note: Any player who left the game prematurely does not score points.

Players count the points they collected for every contribution they made:

> **+2 for introducing yourself**
> **+1 for mentioning something you like/dislike**
> **+1 for agreeing with another character**
> **+2 for becoming the Devil's Advocate**
> **+1 for mentioning somebody you have met recently**
> **+2 for inquiring about something you don't know**
> **+2 for asking a character about something personal**

Finally, each player awards **+3** points to the player of their choice. Alternatively, a player may split those 3 points between two or three players.

Score are revealed and the player (or players) with the most points wins at ***conventioneering.*** Congratulations!

6- Variants & Other experiments

Timer: Set a timer to time the discussion. At the end of the Timer, characters are retired and the game ends.

Bowl of chips: Fill a bowl with potato chips. Eat a potato chip every time you contribute to the discussion. Play until the bowl of chips is empty or until all the players are full.

Study: Maybe you and your group of players have a very precise idea of what you want to do. In this case, you can plan the game well in advance and research your topic, prepare props (fake mustaches are always important!), food, costumes, names, etc.

Hack: Why not play as French impressionists in a parisian café in 1876? or poets in a fashionable London drawing-room in 1815? Or as aliens of different races on a distant planet attending a Trekkie convention? or as anthropomorphic animals? You decide. This might require some planning and some research (cf. **Study**).

Friendship is Magic: Do not play for points instead your character's goal is to find a best friend among the other characters. The game ends once everybody has found a best friend. Everybody wins.

So Meta: Play this game at an actual convention.

Legacy: Play several games. Keep the same cast of characters that go to the same convention year after year. What happens?

Special Thanks & Credits

Conventioneering was written by Thomas Gallecier.
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Special thanks go to: Natalie & Tweezer, Grégory Pogorzelski, Jérôme Larré, Eric Nieudan, Cédric Ferrand, Alex Mayo, Carl Niclas, Matt Evans (Board Game Replay), David Cook, GenCant, Cards Against Humanity, the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown, Brent Newhall, Jared Sorensen, Epidiah Ravachol, Matthijs Holter, Whitney "Strix" Beltrán, Emily Care Boss, Jason Morningstar, Evan Torner, and the many strangers I have yet to meet.

Longue vie à la 2CVform !

Appendix: Program sheet, Badges (x2), Reference sheet.

CONVENTION PROGRAM

Name:

_____

Time: _____ Place: _____

The Buzz (topics):

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Notes:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Card 1

HOME: _____

AGE: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

CONTRIBUTIONS:

> introducing yourself * ☐
> mentioning something you like/dislike ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
> agreeing with another character ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
> becoming the Devil's Advocate * ☐
> mentioning somebody you have met recently ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
> inquiring about something you don't know ☐☐☐☐☐☐
> asking a character about something personal ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Card 2 (back)

name _____

convention

Card 3

HOME: _____

AGE: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

CONTRIBUTIONS:

> introducing yourself * ☐
> mentioning something you like/dislike ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
> agreeing with another character ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
> becoming the Devil's Advocate * ☐
> mentioning somebody you have met recently ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
> inquiring about something you don't know ☐☐☐☐☐☐
> asking a character about something personal ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Card 4 (back)

name _____

convention

CONTRIBUTIONS:

Introducing yourself
scored the first time you introduce yourself

Mentioning something you like or dislike

Agreeing with another character

Becoming the Devil's Advocate
scored the first time you disagree with somebody strongly

Mentioning somebody you have met recently

Inquiring about something you don't know about

Asking a character about something personal

SPECIAL RULES:

Take a break
at any time, but come back

Pause the game
clap twice to suspend the game

Retiring a character
say goodbye and leave at any time

Bringing in a new character
come back as a new character (new badge)