

IF I WERE PRESIDENT - 22XX HYPER EDITION

WHAT IS THIS?

We will play a presidential debate in the near future. Some of us will be candidates, some of us reporters, some of us just normal people with questions to ask of the big shots.

The candidates will big make big speeches, and snipe at each other while tackling issues like genetic selection, drones, and subliminal corporate ads for kids.

A president will be elected, and then we'll flash forward twenty years. We'll do it again, and again, and again, envisioning a weirder and wilder future, until there's no more Republicans and Democrats, just robot toasters agitating for rights, while candidates debate whether blowing up the moon would be good for the economy.

HOW DO I PLAY?

Gather 3-10 people in a place where you can give loud speeches and be silly for one to two hours. Print out these rules, and a set of the role cards.

Read aloud "What Is This?" then continue on to...

SAFETY FIRST

The door is always open in this game. You're here to have fun, and to help other people have fun. If at any point you're not having fun, feel free to leave. You don't need to explain why, and you can come back or not, your call. No one will judge you for it.

Similarly, politicians say stupid things sometimes. If what somebody's saying is awkward or offensive, don't let this ruin the game. If somebody says "Rubbish!" then change what you're speaking about, instantly. If somebody says "Cut!" then we all stop playing and take a breather.

TONE CHECK

Then say:

The tone of this game is a delicate balance: we're going for a mix of surrealist politics, utopic visions, and satire. Play each and every character as sincere (or weasel-mouthed) as they deserve. If you stop believing that your sentient toaster really deserves rights and start cracking bread puns, then it'll all fall apart.

More importantly, this game depends on earnest hope for the future. So I want everybody to close their eyes, and think of what you might hope the future holds. Does it mean living forever? Does it mean uploading your brain to the internet? Is it flying cars, or moddable bodies, talking animals, alien contact, or never having to sleep?

(wait a few seconds)

Now, what are you afraid might happen? Are you worried the world will plunge into war? That we'll run out of food? That people will just only interact with their phones and never talk? Take a few moments, and think about what you might dread about the future.

(wait a few seconds)

Now think for a moment of all the political debates you've watched, all the speeches you heard. Imagine that thrilling technology, those scary new vistas, and think of it being processed down into 15-second soundbites, into focus groups, into pre-rehearsed zingers.

(wait a few seconds)

Now open your eyes, and let's get ready for our first debate, ten years into the future.

Y'ALL GOT ISSUES

Before the first debate, figure out two important issues that are going to be key to this debate. Use the list of ideas on the last page to help suggest things. Try to keep the changes to our society modest at first, before exploding in the future.

Make it clear that anybody can veto any issue. When you have two issues that people are excited about, talk about them for a minute (but only a minute, keep it moving). If it's new technology, what does it look like? If it's changes in how society works, who likes this change, who's afraid of it?

When you've got the barest of grasps on the issues and facts at hand, just like all the politicians, you're ready to start.

LET'S GET READY TO...

Everybody should pick roles now. If this is the first debate, you should be the Moderator. There should be at least two Candidates, and a Moderator, but beyond that, it's up to you.

The Moderator's card gives all the instructions on how to start. If people not involved in the game walk up, or seem curious, let them join the fun! Give them a "What's This?" card, and then one of the unused Audience cards.

As the Moderator, pay attention to making sure everybody gets time to shine, and most of all, keep things moving.

Once things are winding down, the Moderator calls for closing statements, and you're done.

THE BIG PARTY

Everybody in the Audience now casts their vote for who wins. Moderator breaks ties.

The winner gives her victory speech, and lays out what they're going to do about those two issues once in office.

THE NEXT MORNING

Everybody else now creates one scene that takes place during that president's term, addressing one of those policies and some complications.

Examples:

- A news reporter reporting on the unexpected consequences of one of the policies. Go to a live interview with somebody affected.
- The other policy passes, but only after some compromises. Report on what those compromises are. Interview the President and the opposition.

A BRIGHT TOMORROW

Move the game 10-50 years into the future. Whoever was President probably isn't going to be running this time, unless they've instituted a dictatorship, or it's their cloned descendant, or unless they were a robot all along, which when you add all of those odds together, is pretty likely.

Come up with new issues, build off what's already happened, and go for another debate.

After you've done a few of these, see if the game's done. If you're out of steam or want to end on a high note or you just got places to be, then end it right there. Congratulations! You're experts on the future. May your consulting fees be ever large.

IF I WERE PRESIDENT - *THE FUTURE*

TRACKING CHIPS FOR KIDS

CORPORATE-RUN KINDERGARTEN

“DESIGNER” BABIES

DEBT REFORMATION CAMPS

AI DOCTORS IN HOSPITALS

LEGALIZING ALL DRUGS

BRAIN-BASED INTERNET JACKS

REPLACING LITERATURE WITH PROGRAMMING

ERADICATING THE “DARK” INTERNET

NATIONAL INTERNET IDENTITIES

SELF-DRIVING CARS

BANNING MOON TOURISM

ONE DOLLAR, ONE VOTE

LAW ENFORCEMENT ROBOTS

MOON COLONIES

RIGHTS FOR SPEECH-ENABLED PETS

CLONING TECHNOLOGY

NEOCORP CITIES

ANIMAL SPLICING

MEMORY TRANSPLANTS

INDEPENDENCE FOR MARS COLONY

MARRIAGE FOR ROBOT SURROGATES

REPLACEMENT OF ENGLISH WITH EVU
(ENHANCED VOCAL UTTERANCES)

RETIREMENT AT AGE 30

RESPONDING TO FIRST ALIEN CONTACT

RECONSTITUTING ANTARCTICA WITH
SYNTHETIC ICE

WHAT TO DO ABOUT THAT ASTEROID?

COLONIZATION TO ALPHA CENTAURI

FORCED IMMORTALITY TREATMENTS

ANTI-VIOLENCE BEHAVIOR CHIPS

HIVEMINDS

ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT

MANDATORY POPULATION GROWTH

BANNING OF ‘PLEASURE’ FOR GREATER
PRODUCTIVITY

LIFTING THE BAN ON SELF-REPLICATING
NANOTECH

RIGHTS FOR ALL ELECTRICAL APPLI-
ANCES

QUICK-SWITCH IDENTITIES

RESEARCH INTO TIME-TRAVEL FOR
SAVING EXTINCT SPECIES

THE TWO HOUR WORK-WEEK

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

THIS IS A PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE
...IN THE FUTURE.

YOUR OPINION MATTERS!
YOU TOO CAN MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

GROUND RULES:
CLAP/CHEER/HISS, BUT DON'T INTERRUPT
OTHERS.

WAIT FOR THE MODERATOR TO CALL ON YOU
IF SOMEBODY SAYS "RUBBISH", THAT MEANS
CHANGE TOPICS, IMMEDIATELY.

IF SOMEBODY SAYS "CUT", STOP PLAYING
TRY AND STICK TO THE "ISSUES"
DON'T BE A JERK.

AUDIENCE - THE STORYTELLER

YOU ARE:

- SOMEBODY WITH A STORY
- THAT STORY'S VERY IMPORTANT TO YOU
- THAT STORY HAS TO DEAL WITH ONE OF THE ISSUES, AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS COUNTRY
- THAT STORY'S NOT GOING TO BE RUSHED
- DIRECT THE STORY TO A CANDIDATE IN PARTICULAR, BUT DON'T ASK A QUESTION UNLESS YOU'RE FORCED TO
- MAKE THE MODERATOR AND CANDIDATES MILDLY ANNOYED, BUT DON'T DERAILED THE GAME

AUDIENCE - THE TRAGIC

YOU ARE:

- SOMEBODY WHO TRAVELLED FAR TO BE HERE
- GOING TO BE HEARD
- SOMEONE WITH A TERRIBLE THING THAT HAPPENED TO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU LOVED BECAUSE OF ONE OF THE ISSUES
- DEMANDING THAT THIS NOT HAPPEN AGAIN
- SURE THAT PROMISES ARE THE ONLY THING THAT COUNTS
- SOMEONE WHO WANTS RESPECT AND DIGINITY

AUDIENCE - THE NORMAL

YOU ARE:

- JUST A NORMAL PERSON/ROBOT/SENTIENT NANOMASS
- SOMEONE WITH NORMAL PROBLEMS
- SOMEONE WHO'S GOING TO VOTE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING TO HELP YOU
- JUST GOING TO LET THEM KNOW YOUR DEAL, ASK A QUESTION ABOUT HOW THEY'RE GOING TO HELP YOU
- NOT GOING TO LET THEM GO BACK ON BIG IDEAS, ON CAMPAIGN PLATITUDES.

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

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...IN THE FUTURE.

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YOUR VOICE HEARD

GROUND RULES:
CLAP/CHEER/HISS, BUT DON'T INTERRUPT
OTHERS.

WAIT FOR THE MODERATOR TO CALL ON YOU
IF SOMEBODY SAYS "RUBBISH", THAT MEANS
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IF SOMEBODY SAYS "CUT", STOP PLAYING
TRY AND STICK TO THE "ISSUES"
DON'T BE A JERK.

AUDIENCE - THE GOTCHA

YOU ARE:

- CLEVER, OH SO SO CLEVER
- CYNICAL, OH SO CYNICAL
- GOT A REALLY SIMPLE QUESTION FOR ONE OF THE CANDIDATES ON ONE OF THE ISSUES
- BUT WHEN THEY ANSWER IT, THEY CLEARLY HAVEN'T THOUGHT OF YOUR FOLLOWUP!
- ARE YOU SMARTER BECAUSE OF YOUR DEGREES? OR MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT WISDOM THESE STUFFED SUITS CAN'T MATCH

AUDIENCE - JUST HAPPY TO BE HERE

YOU ARE:

- EXCITED
- REALLY EXCITED
- SOMEONE WHO MAYBE HAS A CRUSH ON ONE OF THE CANDIDATES
- GOING TO BE ON TV!!!!111!!
- OH GOD YOU HAD A REALLY GOOD QUESTION WHAT WAS IT WHAT WAS IT THIS IS SO EMBARRASSING I'M ON TV AND NOW I'M JUST GOING TO DISAPPEAR FOREVER
- GOING TO MAYBE JUST ASK SOMETHING REALLY PERSONAL <3

AUDIENCE - THE SIMPLE

YOU ARE:

- SOMEBODY WHO KNOWS THINGS ARE SIMPLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD
- GOING TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATE WHO KNOWS HOW TO GET STUFF DONE
- THE KIND OF PERSON WHO LETS PEOPLE KNOW HOW SALT OF THE EARTH YOU ARE
- SURE THAT THERE OUGHTA BE SIMPLE ANSWERS TO THE BIG PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD.

AUDIENCE - THE IDEALISTIC

YOU ARE:

- A BELIEVER IN THE FUTURE
- SOMEONE WHO WANTS IT FASTER
- WORRIED THAT POLITICIANS ARE GOING TO GET IN THE WAY
- MAYBE SOMEONE WHO JUST WANTS THE POLITICIANS TO PROVE THEY'RE COOL AND DOWN WITH IT
- MAYBE SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO LET THE PEOPLE IN CHARGE KNOW THAT THE REVOLUTION IS COMING, AND THE OLD FOLKS ARE FIRST AGAINST THE WALL

CANDIDATE - THE INCUMBENT

YOU ARE:

- IN CHARGE
- ARE THE ONLY ONE WITH THE EXPERIENCE NECESSARY TO MAKE THINGS HAPPENING
- READY TO PIN THE BLAME ON OTHERS
- GOING TO FIX ANYTHING BAD THAT'S HAPPENING
- VICIOUS WHEN CORNED
- SO KIND AS TO LET THESE OTHER, LESSER POLITICIANS SHARE THE STAGE WITH YOU

CANDIDATE - THE SMILER

YOU ARE:

- LEADING IN ALL THE POLLS
- SOMEONE WHO KNOWS EXACTLY HOW TO KISS A BABY.
- REALLY WELL PREPARED FOR THIS DEBATE, BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN TRAINING TWELVE HOURS A DAY FOR THE LAST WEEK
- CERTAIN THAT THIS IS YOUR TIME
- SOMEONE WHO NEVER LETS THAT SMILE CRACK, NO MATTER THE SITUATION
- A CIPHER AS FAR AS WHAT YOU'D ACTUALLY DO WHEN IN OFFICE

CANDIDATE - THE REBEL

YOU ARE:

- SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO BRING THE WHOLE SYSTEM DOWN
- SOMEONE WHO SEES ALL THE CORRUPTION IN WASHINGTON
- SOMEONE WHO IS AN INSPIRING SPEAKER, PHOTOGENIC, AND WITH A DEVOTED FOLLOWING
- AIMING TO TAKE DOWN THE OTHER CANDIDATES AND MAKE THEM LOOK EMBARRASSED AT ALL COSTS
- MAYBE JUST RIDING THE FAME AND ATTENTION OF THIS DOOMED CAMPAIGN

MODERATOR - THE DIGNIFIED

YOU ARE TRYING TO MAKE THIS FAIR, RESPECTFUL, DIGNIFIED, AND EDUCATIONAL.

YOU HAVE AN IMPOSSIBLE JOB.

SCHEDULE: OPENING STATEMENTS, CALL ON AUDIENCE MEMBERS TO ASK QUESTIONS, CLOSING STATEMENTS

ASK YOUR OWN QUESTIONS IF THE AUDIENCE IS LAGGING.

KEEP THINGS BRISK, AND FUN

MOVE ON FROM ICKY TOPICS QUICKLY.

GIVE OUT "WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?" CARDS TO PEOPLE WHO WANDER BY.

MODERATOR - THE FRESH TALENT

YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW MUCH ABOUT POLITICS, BUT THAT'S WHAT MAKES YOU GREAT.

YOUR JOB IS TO LOOK GREAT AND BE COOL

SCHEDULE: OPENING STATEMENTS, CALL ON AUDIENCE MEMBERS TO ASK QUESTIONS, CLOSING STATEMENTS

ASK YOUR OWN QUESTIONS IF THE AUDIENCE IS LAGGING.

KEEP THINGS BRISK, AND FUN

MOVE ON FROM ICKY TOPICS QUICKLY.

GIVE OUT "WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?" CARDS TO PEOPLE WHO WANDER BY.

CANDIDATE - THE BUSINESSMAN

YOU ARE:

- RICH
- MULTIPLE SWIMMING POOLS FULL OF MONEY RICH
- BUT FROM HUMBLE ORIGINS WHERE YOU HAD A (SOMEWHAT) LOWER NUMBER OF SWIMMING POOLS
- AND OBVIOUSLY, THAT MEANS YOU'RE IDEALLY QUALIFIED TO RUN THE COUNTRY
- TOTALLY GOING TO HELP EVERYBODY ELSE BECOME RICH AND PROSPEROUS
- GOING TO KEEP A STRAIGHT FACE WHEN YOU SAY THAT.

CANDIDATE - THE FRINGE

YOU ARE:

- SOMEONE WHO'S FIGURED IT OUT
- IT'S REALLY SIMPLE: EVERYTHING WOULD WORK OUT IF WE JUST DID...
- SOMEONE WITH LOTS OF QUIRKY AND MADE-UP PHRASES FOR WHAT THE PROBLEMS ARE WITH THE GOVERNMENT
- SURE THAT IT'S THE MEDIA AND THE GOVERNMENT AND EVERYBODY OUT TO GET TO YOU
- JUST WAITING FOR UTOPIA IT'S COMING IT'S COMING FOR YOU