

# Imagine

*A man is sitting on a bench. Daylight. People are passing by in the park. The exciting coo from the pigeons when they find bread crumbs on the ground.*

*A family dinner. The aroma of meatloaf. A game show is on the television. Two children. Two women. The wallpaper is typical for the 1970s.*

Take the time and watch someone on the street. Who is that person? Where is she going? What happened in that person's past that shaped who she is today? How is she like when she's talking to her friends? Is there a special moment waiting that will turn her life around? What will she do when she will come of old age?

I remember when I did that, trying to come up with answers about someone I didn't know, and I got that tingling sensation in my gut as if I was riding a roller coaster. The same feeling I got the nights when I lay back in a field, watched the night sky and wondered how vast the universe really was.

This is what *Imagine* will do to us. We're going to follow several modern, fictive people and give them depth by both exploring their memories and to see their hopes and wishes come true.

Time and space will disappear as we become immersed in this fiction together. By sharing and contributing to the fiction we will build a fellowship as we create a collective memory.

The rest of the text will show how to tell a collaborative story to accomplish this.

## KNOWING ONE ANOTHER

Start by presenting your name and then pick one line below and read it out loud. Pass the list around and let everybody do the same thing. Enforce these things in play!

"I promise to ..."

"... be open to learn how to appreciate this game."

"... leave a blank mind of where we're going."

"... keep the world ordinary and peaceful."

"... support the other participants and their ideas."

"... ask and discuss if I'm unsure of anything."

A mundane world.

A peaceful place.

Telling instead of acting.

We do this together.

Break the routines!

A story emerges.

No conflict!

We tell to find out.

No pressure. Relax!

Be aware of each other.

We're all unique. Nourish that.

Tell the first thing that springs into mind.

If you draw a blank, lean back.

## THE OVERALL ROUTINE

A typical session consists of three situations.

- The first situation introduces a person or a group and what they are doing at the moment. We will deepen the situation by exploring their memories and hopes.
- The second situation does the same thing.
- The third situation is created by putting the people and their hopes from the two previous situations in the same activity. How do they relate to each other?

If we want to play a longer session, use the people and the hopes in the third situation, add a new second situation (fourth in the chart to the right) and then a third (fifth) that merges some of the previously established people and hopes. Repeat this routine up until we think that we can't add any more situations, when a participant needs to leave, or when we feel that the craving for knowing more of the fiction is filled. *Then the game ends.*

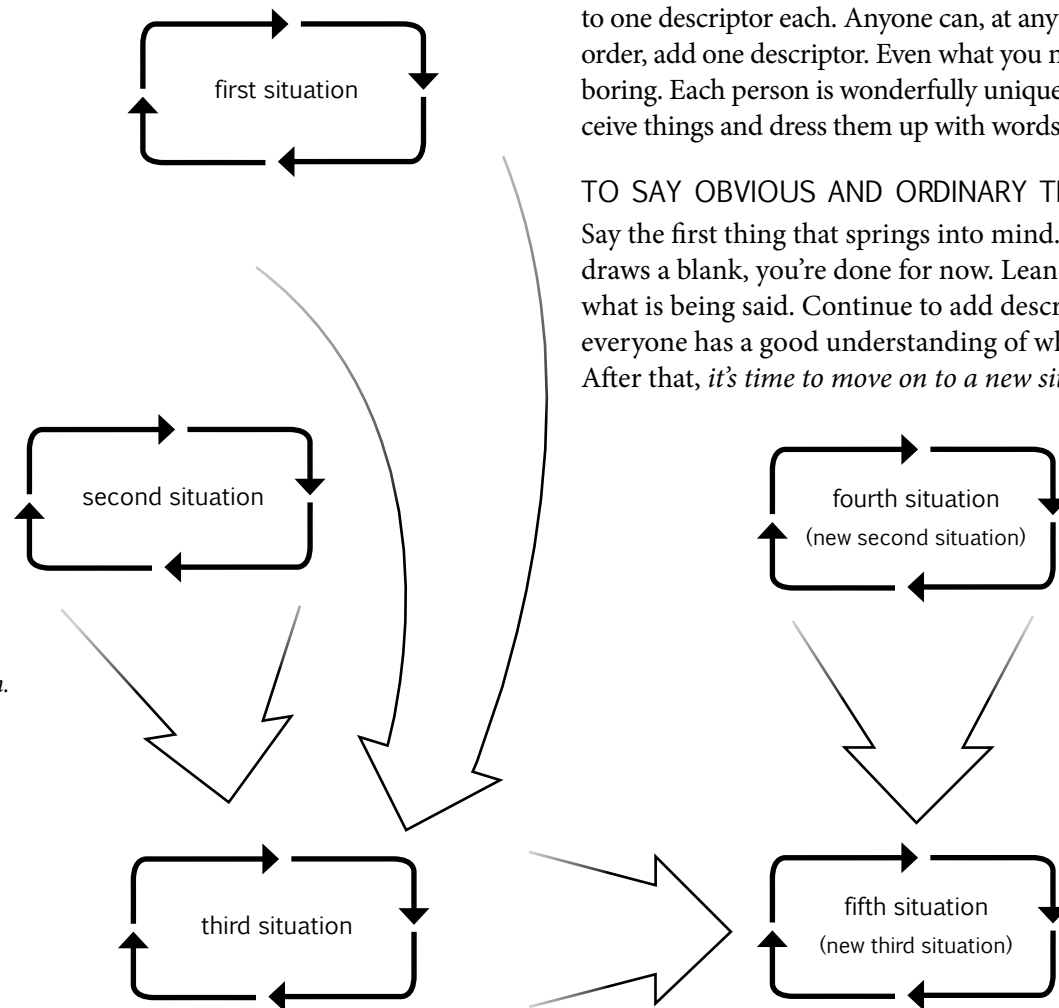
## BREAK THE ROUTINES

Note how each descriptor below differs from the other:

*The aroma of meatloaf. A game show is on the television. Two children.*

Smell; sound; people. By constantly shifting between describing different elements, you will keep up interest of what is to come. You could assume different styles of narration, like hard-boiled noir or describing through emotions, or you could alter cadence by varying the length of the descriptors.

As soon as you notice that the descriptions aren't broadening the situation but instead deepening what has already been established, you have formed a routine. Break it! Describe something else, as long as it's in the same place during the same time. It doesn't even have to be relevant.



keep on building like these last two situations to achieve longer games

## TAKE TURNS

Help yourself breaking the routines by limiting yourselves to one descriptor each. Anyone can, at any time and in any order, add one descriptor. Even what you might think of as boring. Each person is wonderfully unique in how we perceive things and dress them up with words. Cherish that!

## TO SAY OBVIOUS AND ORDINARY THINGS

Say the first thing that springs into mind. If your mind draws a blank, you're done for now. Lean back and listen what is being said. Continue to add descriptors until everyone has a good understanding of what is going on. After that, *it's time to move on to a new situations.*

## THE PRESENT TIMELINE

*Play time: 1-5 minutes*

A situation always starts in the PRESENT TIME. When is not important but it might be established. Make a fist to acknowledge that we're in the PRESENT TIME and encourage everybody to do the same thing to make it clearer.

Start with establishing one or more persons that are doing an activity. Then take turns to add more and more descriptors to it. The first page has two examples of what it can sound like. We may play out a dialogue between the characters in this timeline. During the course of the game, we will return to the PRESENT TIME to give it an update or move it towards the characters' HOPES.

## LEAN FORWARD TO SHOW INTEREST

Everyone who wants to participate leans forward. If anyone feels that they don't have any more to contribute with to the current timeline, that person should lean backwards. When all but one leans backwards, *then it's time to move to another timeline.*

## PLAY TO SEE WHERE EVERYTHING LEADS

When the flow of the descriptors fade and only one player is engaged, change timeline to bring MEMORIES and HOPES into the picture. Introduce ordinary ideas to see how they develop when everybody adds descriptors.

The main purpose of MEMORIES and HOPES is to add more fuel so the PRESENT can continue its course. When people think there is enough information to advance the PRESENT timeline, return to it and see where things go. If no one has any new ideas of how to evolve this situation, *start a new situation.*

## Present Time



## Memory



## Hope



## REVEAL MEMORIES

*Play time: 1-3 minutes*

If you want to introduce a relation, a happening or characters that will last long in the fiction during the PRESENT TIME, you must first establish it as a MEMORY. Cup your hands and encourage everybody else to do the same thing. Start with a person doing an activity. Take turns adding descriptors. Sometimes, describing only the activity will be enough.

A long lasting character will stay in the PRESENT TIME until the situation has come to its end. A clerk behind a counter, that will only exchange a few words with the established characters, doesn't have to be introduced as a MEMORY.

## GIVE THE CHARACTERS HOPE

*Play time: ~1 minute*

Consequences are shown as HOPES. It can be a result of MEMORIES or the progress in the PRESENT TIME, but it can also introduce goals that everybody should strive for when playing out the PRESENT TIME.

A HOPE is all but only a short glimpse. Start off in the regular way with a hand gesture. This time, you reach into the air. Describe one or more people and the activity that they are doing. This alone will do just fine. It seldom happens that the moment is elaborated with more descriptors.

A situation has between 1-3 different glimpses of HOPES. The PRESENT TIME never plays them out but instead takes steps to move closer to them. The journey towards the end is more interesting than the end itself. If a HOPE shows the man on the bench winning at lottery, the PRESENT TIME should include him finding a lottery ticket somehow.

## HOW TO PLAY OUT DIALOGUES

Dialogues should only happen in the PRESENT timeline. Before any character can talk, a description must first be done to tell what they are doing at the moment. “Sarah is taking out the plates from a cupboard: ‘Can you turn off the TV, please?’”.

Dialogues follows the same routine as anything else: only one line at time. This means that several people can talk for the same person.

## BY USING TWO ELEMENTS

When adding descriptors, it’s always preferable to use one element to describe another. You could, for example, add a smell through a dialogue or time through an object:

“Keith waves his hand before his nose: ‘Who farted?’”  
“The wallpaper is typical for the 1970s”.

The list to the right gives examples of elements to add if anyone finds it hard to come up with a descriptor. The best thing is to say the first thing that comes into mind because that’s the feeling you already have.

## WHERE FINDING OUT IS THE INTERESTING PART

Imagine the world as peaceful and that the only thing that we’re going to experience is the happening of other peoples’ lives. It’s going to be tempting to involve conflict, like introducing a cheating spouse or having a person killed.

Don’t fall into this trap. If you introduce conflict in the first two situations, it will be harder to merge them together when it’s time for the third situation. It’s interesting enough to see where things go by experiencing the result from the unique ideas of each participant.

Smell

Sound

Light

Time

Object

Person

Place

Emotion

Dialogue

Something unexpected

Break routines!

## DO MAKE MISTAKES

Sooner or later someone will add two descriptors in a row, forget to add a description before speaking in character, or forget to establish things as a MEMORY before introducing it in the PRESENT. Anything that becomes a pattern to follow is a routine and *Imagine* is built upon them. Break these routines!

When the group gets the hang of how to interact, we can loosen up on how to play this game. Mistakes will be made at the beginning of the game but over time play will become more fluid. All this is part of evolving this game.

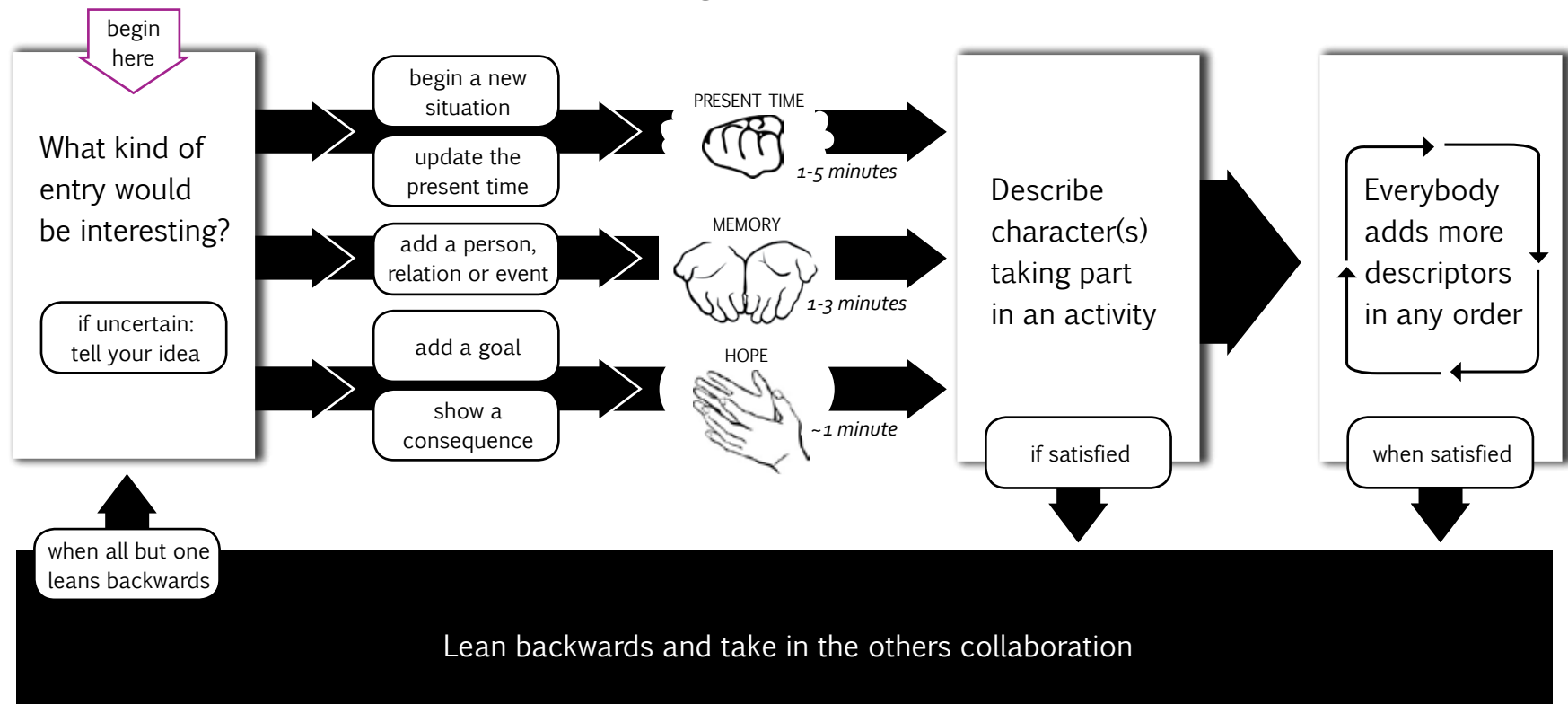
## BECAUSE YOU EVOLVE THE GAME

Take time afterwards to talk about the game. Discuss what you thought worked and what can be changed next time to make the flow even better.

## STEP BY STEP INTRODUCTION

- Explain the point of this game. (Page 1)
- Read the sentences on the first page out loud.
- Explain the overall routine and when the game ends. (P. 2)
- Show how it works with the three timelines. (P. 3)
- How to keep up interest? Break the routines! (P. 2)
- Explain how taking turns works. It’s we together that creates something. Play out to see where it leads. (P. 2)
- How does a situation end? Lean backwards when done contributing. (P. 3)
- Dialogues are for the PRESENT timeline only. (P. 4)
- A bonus, but not a requirement, if one element is used to describe another. (P. 4)
- Put a token in the PRESENT TIME. (P. 3)
- Begin the first situation. Explain what it must start with: person(s) and something they do. (P. 3)

## Playing Out a Situation



A mundane world.

A peaceful place.

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