

WHO GOT IT?!

a language and memory freakout party game for two or more players

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THE BASIC IDEA

All you need to play is any deck of cards. Each card has a number of attributes, like color, number, and suit.

Players take turns drawing cards and assigning words to these attributes. If all attributes are assigned, whoever says the card's full phrase first "got it" – they win the card.

THE BASIC GAME

With a 52-card deck, each card has three attributes:

COLOR	red / black
SUIT	hearts / diamonds / clubs / spades
VALUE	low (2-5) / medium (6-9) / high (10-K)

Each corresponds to a type of word: colors and suits are adjectives and values are nouns. A fully assigned card is represented by a three word phrase, "[adjective] [adjective] [noun]."

Play begins with the first player drawing a card from the top of the shuffled deck and placing it face-up on the table. Nothing is assigned yet, so this player gives a three-word phrase for this card. Say it's a 3♦, and they say "nasty hairy octopus." Now all red cards are nasty, all diamonds are hairy, and all low value cards are octopi. Any player who assigns an attribute gets to keep the card.

The next player draws another card, and gets to assign any free attributes. If the second player drew a Q♥, the first word is already "nasty" since the card is red, so they might say "nasty huge astronaut." Now all hearts are huge and all high cards are astronauts, so the game looks like this:

COLOR	SUIT	VALUE	PHRASE
red	♦	2, 3, 4, 5	"nasty hairy octopus"
red	♥	octopus	"nasty huge octopus"
red	♦	6,7,8 9	"nasty hairy [?]"
red	♥	[?]	"nasty huge [?]"
red	♦	10, J, Q, K	"nasty hairy astronaut"
red	♥	astronaut	"nasty huge astronaut"

This would repeat for all the black cards, but their color and suit labels are not yet assigned. Play continues in this way around the circle, drawing cards and assigning free attributes. However, whenever a card is drawn for which every attribute is already assigned, it's up for grabs: whoever can finish correctly saying the three-word phrase first wins the card! For example, if the third player in the above game were to draw a 10♦, whoever can first say "nasty hairy astronaut" gets it.

DUELS

If two or more people finish saying the phrase at precisely the same time, now they're in a duel. The current player draws another card, and the players in the duel go at it amongst themselves while the others sit out. Duels can extend to multiple cards if any of the duelers continue to tie, and whoever wins gets the whole stack!

WHO GOT IT?! CARDS

Aces and jokers are special "Who Got It cards." When a player draws one, they become a duelmaster. With as serious a snarl as they can muster, they glance about and say:

WHO. GOT. IT. WHOGOTIT?!

... and now they're in a duel with whoever they lock eyes with on the last "it." Holding eye contact, they draw another card from the deck and the duel commences.

If a special card is drawn early in game before most attributes are assigned, put it back in the deck and draw another card.

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

STAY STYLISH

A core purpose of this game is to make your friends yell weird shit. Be creative with your contributions!

NO BACKSIES

When calling out the phrase for a card, you can take as long as you want and pause between words, but you must never say a wrong word. In the "nasty hairy astronaut" example, if you start saying "nasty hu-" and then catch yourself, too late – you're out for this card.

COOPERATION IS GOOD

It can be hard to remember all this random stuff. Between cards during the game, it's fine to pause and ask for clarification or go over the labels.

BE ASSERTIVE

Especially in a big group, inevitably people will step on each other's toes; if you were in there first, speak up!

FINISHING UP

A round ends when the deck is fully used up. Players count their cards, and get one point per card. A game consists of one or more rounds, where the cards are reshuffled between each. Each round can either stick with the existing labels from the previous round (to test your fluency) or can start fresh so everything has to be re-assigned (to test your flexibility).

Whoever has the most points in the end is the winner.

Congrats, winner.

You Got It.



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WHO GOT IT?!

Variations

The basic rules given above are just a start – below are some possible variations on the core game to try!

DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

The attributes given above are by no means the only attributes you could use.

You could decide, for example, to divide values into simply “numbers” (2-10) and “face cards” (J, Q, K), or by parity into “even” (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, Q) and “odd” (3, 5, 7, 9, J, K).

You could also play with an expanded or varied deck. The original version of the game was played with the 2 through 8 cards from two decks, where each number was its own noun.

You could even play with a deck of cards from a different game. For instance, if you use a Set deck, the attributes would just be the Set card attributes (number, shape, shading, color).

You could even make crazy variations by mixing together cards from different decks, and the card style could be an attribute as well. Anything can be an attribute - play around!

DIFFICULTY LEVELS

The difficulty level of the game is proportional to how many words need to be recalled and the total number of possible outcomes. In the basic version of the game we have

STANDARD 2 colors × 4 suits × 3 values

and since colors and suits overlap (i.e., there’s no black ♦), we get 12 possible three-word phrases that could represent a card.

The game can be vastly simplified – or at least focused more on reaction time – by simply cutting out the suits, so we have

EASY 2 colors × 3 values

or only 6 two-word phrases. This can be a good way to play to get people started.

On the other hand, we can make the game arbitrarily more difficult by adding more attributes, or making the existing attributes more fine-grained. If we take the example of even/odd parity from above, we now have

HARD 2 colors × 2 parities × 4 suits × 3 values

which gives 24 possible four-word phrases.

Or we could switch color for parity to remove the overlap with suits, and order values by every three cards (2, 3, 4; then 5, 6, 7; then 8, 9, 10; then J, Q, K), so we get

HARD 2 parities × 4 suits × 5 values

for a total of 40 possible three-word phrases. See how your group handles the game, and adjust the difficulty accordingly!

SCHEMING AND THEMING

Schemes







Another part of the game that can be varied is the “scheme” – the ordering of attributes and types of words in the phrases you make. The scheme for the standard game above is:

[adjective] [adjective] [noun]
COLOR × 2 SUIT × 4 VALUE × 3

But why not get creative and change this around? Here’s an example based on the EASY difficulty level on the left, with the values coming first and a scheme for compound nouns:

[noun] [noun]
VALUE × 3 COLOR × 2

With this scheme we might have a game that ends up like so:

VALUE	COLOR	PHRASE
2, 3, 4, 5 cabbage	 stew  barf	“cabbage stew” “cabbage barf”
6, 7, 8, 9 dog	 stew  barf	“dog stew” “dog barf”
10, J, Q, K weasel	 stew  barf	“weasel stew” “weasel barf”

We can even make sentences about people in the room:

[person’s name] [verb] [noun]
SUIT × 4 VALUE × 3 PARITY × 2

So maybe we’ll get a 6♠ with the phrase “Rob milks unicorns,” where all the spades are “Rob,” the middle cards are the verb “to milk,” and the even cards are unicorns.

Themes

As you may notice, in spite of the seeming randomness in how words get jammed together in this game, sometimes themes will naturally coalesce over the course of a game. But we can also decide on a theme from the start! It could be as simple as deciding to aim for “outer space” or “bodily functions.”

Here are a few examples of more complex schemes and themes you could try. Let me know if you find a particularly fun one!

SCHEME	THEME	EXAMPLE
[adjective] [name] [verb]	goofy insults	“stupid Abi poops”
this is my friend [animal], the [profession]	introductions at the zoo cocktail party	“this is my friend Gorilla, the neurosurgeon”
[literary theory verb] [author]’s [fancy noun]	snobby paper titles	“deconstructing Foucault’s marginality”
[pronoun] [are / are not] [noun]	who are we, really?	“I am a coconut!” “You are not a walrus!”
it’s like [company name] for [market segment]	silicon valley startup ideas	“it’s like Snapchat for infants”