

A Response to the Esteemed Dr. Crackpot

A game of academic squabbles for two or more players

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You play as rival academics with incompatible views slugging it out in the pages of one of your field's journals. Before you begin, choose your names and shared field of study.

The first player writes an abstract for their latest work. It should be a paragraph that clearly defines their conclusion and at least some of the evidence on which it is based. Give the paper a nice, academic title.

The second player then writes "A Response to [Paper Title]," refuting player one's work and advancing their own conflicting hypothesis. However petty the difference seems to you, it is irreconcilable in the minds of your characters, who have entire careers built on either side of it.

Play continues with players attempting to defend the integrity of their work by alternating responses to responses. If you have more than two players, additional players are encouraged to come up with their own theories, although it is permissible to lend partial or full support to another player's position. If after a few responses each you would like to extend play, Player two may choose to write an abstract for their latest work instead of another response.

Play ends when responses become too personal and are therefore completely unpublishable by the journal. As an epilogue, the academics are assumed to have gotten into a fistfight at a conference.

Stuck on a response? Start here:

"[Name] fails to consider the context of..."

"[Paper] rests on outdated assumptions"

"[Claim] has been widely repeated but never successfully replicated"

Cite older work, especially your own, to strengthen your argument

Cite older work, especially your rivals', to show where it has gone wrong

Cite older work by a third party that predates this divide and has ambiguous interpretations

Escalate the level and nature of criticism from the current work, to past work, to your rival