

Cirque du Socrates

The crowd gathers around the circus ring to see a most spectacular thing: philosophers claiming to be psychics! They call for participants from the audience, and before your eyes they begin to transmit knowledge from one mind to another. But will this trick work? And if so, who is the best of the psychic philosophers?

Overview

This is a cooperative studying game for 3-5 players who play as psychic philosophers and members of the audience. The philosophers take turns trying to transfer knowledge to the participants, trying to maintain the illusion that they are actually psychic, until the grand finale when the opposing philosophers will test how well their psychic transfers worked!

15 minutes to learn; 30 minutes to play.

Materials Needed

- Deck of Truths (about 10-30 flashcards of some material that everyone is partially familiar with and the group would like to learn better)
 - For an example flashcard deck, see the materials included with the print-and-play version of these rules
- Strike Tokens, 5 for each player (such as coins or paper clips)

Setup

Assign each player to be a Philosopher or a Participant. For your first game, the Philosophers should be more knowledgeable about the Deck of Truths than Participants. See the table below for how many of each role to have.

Players	Philosophers	Participants
3	2	1
4	3	1
5	3	2

Deal out the Deck of Truths evenly to the Philosophers, so that only they can see them.

Main Act

(When playing with 5 players, alternate who is the Active Participant every turn.)

Choose a Philosopher to go first. On their turn, they draw the top card of their Deck of Truths and hold it so that other Philosophers can see what's on the card but the Participants can't. The Philosopher then tries to get the Active Participant to say what is on the card, primarily through the use of the Three Psychic Techniques:

- 1. Priming** - the Philosopher can talk about anything that isn't directly on the card

2. **Choosing** - the Philosopher can offer a choice of possible truths and let the Participant come to their own conclusion from those options
3. **Answering** - The Philosopher can answer a Participant's question, as long as the answer isn't on the card

Once the Participant says what's on the card, the turn is over and the Philosopher hands her card to the Philosopher to her left, which he puts in his Finale pile. Turns proceed clockwise. Continue until every card has been seen and all cards are in someone's Finale pile.

While the Philosopher and Active Participant discuss, the other Philosophers listen to try to interrupt, proving themselves as the best Philosopher. There are Four Interruptible Failings they are watching out for:

1. **Leading** - the Philosopher tried to give the Participant a Choice, but only offered one option, or it was obvious which option the Philosopher was hinting at.
2. **Telling** - the Philosopher said exactly what was on the card, or tried to say it with a simple obfuscation (like "rhymes with...")
3. **Belaboring** - the Philosopher continued to engage the Participant about the card after the turn was over.
4. **Guessing** - the Participant asked a question which tried to directly get at what's on the card, or they asked a question that the Philosopher couldn't answer without Telling.

When an Interruptible Failing is called, the rest of the players (excluding the accused) can veto it and cancel the Interruption. Otherwise, the accused player is given a Strike token. If any player receives their sixth Strike Token, the show falls apart and everyone loses. (But the player who failed loses the most for ruining the show!)

Grand Finale

For the Grand Finale, turns proceed similarly to the Main Act. On their turn, a Philosopher will draw from their Finale pile to quiz the Active Participant. Unlike the Main Act, the Philosopher's goal is now to ask the hardest question possible about the card's contents, giving no assistance to the Participant. If the Active Participant gets the question right, give them the card to keep. Otherwise, give this card to the Philosopher to your right (the one who originally prepared the Participants on that card).

Once all Finale cards have been played through, it's time for the audience to rate the show with their applause. If the Participants collectively have at least as many cards as the Philosophers (collectively), everyone wins! If the Participants have at least twice as many cards as the Philosophers, it was a great show. If the Participants have more than three times as many cards as the Philosophers, the audience gives a standing ovation for an amazing performance!

Additional accolades are given to the best Participant, whoever has the most cards among them, and the best Philosopher, whoever has the least cards among them.