

= The Game (mind game) =

The Game is a mental game where the objective is to avoid thinking about The Game itself . Thinking about The Game constitutes a loss , which must be announced each time it occurs . It is impossible to win most versions of The Game . Depending on the variation of The Game , the whole world , or all those aware of the game , are playing it all the time . Tactics have been developed to increase the number of people aware of The Game and thereby increase the number of losses .

Though the origins of The Game are unknown , a game featuring ironic processing was played by Leo Tolstoy in 1840 .

= = Gameplay = =

There are three commonly reported rules to The Game :

Everyone in the world is playing The Game . (Sometimes narrowed to : " Everybody in the world who knows about The Game is playing The Game " , or alternatively , " You are always playing The Game . ") A person cannot choose to not play The Game ; it does not require consent to play and one can never stop playing .

Whenever one thinks about The Game , one loses .

Losses must be announced . This can be verbally , with a phrase such as " I just lost The Game " , or in any other way : for example , via Facebook . Some people may have signals or expressions that remind others of The Game .

What constitutes thinking about The Game is not always clear . If one discusses The Game without explicitly realizing that they have lost , this may or may not constitute a loss . If someone says " What is The Game ? " before understanding the rules , whether they have lost is up for interpretation . According to some interpretations , one does not lose when someone else announces their loss , although the second rule implies that one loses regardless of what made them think about The Game . After a player has announced a loss , or after one thinks of The Game , some variants allow for a grace period between three seconds to thirty minutes to forget about the game , during which the player cannot lose the game again .

The common rules do not define a point at which The Game ends . However , some players state that The Game ends when the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom announces on television that " The Game is up . "

Most variations of The Game do not allow for a person to win . One interpretation is that one is winning the game whenever they are not thinking about it . An xkcd comic reads : " You just won The Game " and tells players , " You 're free ! " Another is that one has won when they have completely forgotten about The Game .

= = = Strategies = = =

Strategies focus on making others lose The Game . Common methods include saying " The Game " out loud or writing about The Game on a hidden note , in graffiti in public places , or on banknotes . Associations may be made with The Game , especially over time , so that one thing inadvertently causes one to lose . Some players enjoy thinking of elaborate pranks that will cause others to lose the game .

Other strategies involve merchandise : T @-@ shirts , buttons , mugs , posters and bumper stickers have been created to advertise The Game . The Game is also spread via social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter .

= = Origin = =

The origins of The Game are uncertain . In a 2008 news article , Justine Wettschreck says The Game has probably been around since the early 1990s , and may have originated in Australia or England . One theory is that it was invented in London in 1996 when two British engineers , Dennis

Begley and Gavin McDowall , missed their last train and had to spend the night on the platform ; they attempted to avoid thinking about their situation and whoever thought about it first lost . Another theory also traces The Game to London in 1996 , when it was created by Jamie Miller " to annoy people " . Journalist Mic Wright of The Next Web recalled playing The Game at school in the late 1990s .

However , The Game may have been created in 1977 by members of the Cambridge University Science Fiction Society when attempting to create a game that did not fit in with game theory . A blog post by Paul Taylor in August 2002 described The Game ; Taylor claimed to have " found out about [the game] online about 6 months ago " . This is the earliest known reference on the internet .

The Game is most commonly spread through the internet , such as via Facebook or Twitter , or by word of mouth .

= = Psychology = =

The Game is an example of ironic processing (also known as the " White Bear Principle ") , in which attempts to avoid certain thoughts make those thoughts more persistent . There are early examples of ironic processing : in 1840 , Leo Tolstoy played the " white bear game " with his brother , where he would " stand in a corner and not think of the white bear " . Fyodor Dostoyevsky mentioned the same game in 1863 in the essay Winter Notes on Summer Impressions .

One psychological study of The Game by Cory Antiel involved 12 participants ; they were asked to record when and why they lost over four weeks . The study itself caused 57 % of participants ' losses ; Antiel claimed The Zeigarnik effect contributed to this . The participants recorded vastly different numbers of losses ; common reasons included " references to taking notes " , " references to time " and " seeing or thinking about other people who also play The Game " . Priming and sensitization played a large part in losses ; no strong correlation with habituation was found .

= = Reception = =

The Game has been described as challenging and fun to play , and as pointless , childish and infuriating . In some Internet forums , such as Something Awful and GameSpy , and several schools , including one in Ohio , The Game has even been banned . The Game has been described as a game , a meme and a " mind virus " .

Newspapers , including Metro , Rutland Herald , The Canadian Press and De Pers , have contained articles about The Game ; Wikinews has interviewed the owner of LoseTheGame.com. Webcomics Saturday Morning Breakfast Cereal , xkcd and Real Life have featured sketches relating to The Game . YouTube videos about The Game have attracted hundreds of thousands of views . In 2008 , the largest Facebook group relating to The Game had over 200 @, @ 000 members . The knowledge engine WolframAlpha answers the query " What is ' The Game ' ? " with the response " You just lost . "

Several celebrities know about The Game . Actor Simon Pegg has tweeted about The Game . Alex Baker has talked about The Game on multiple occasions on Kerrang Radio and Facebook .

Other attempts to increase losses of The Game have involved hoaxes and hacking . The 2009 Time 100 poll was manipulated by the hacktivist group Anonymous , so that the top 21 people 's names formed an acrostic for " marblecake also the game " , referencing The Game .