



'Fog of Love' Is an Often Hilarious Relationship Simulation Game



Fog of Love is a role playing and story-telling cooperative game. It's a romantic comedy played out between two players and — before you say no — you should know that it's one of the most elegant and experiential gaming experiences I've ever had. Not only does it have one of the best back stories behind any game, it is an incredibly fresh take on gaming and (at times) side-achingly funny.

What Is *Fog of Love*?

In *Fog of Love*, you play a fictional character in an unpredictable relationship. It's a comedy that might become a tragedy ... or it might just end up the perfect love story. It is a game that is, at times, touching, emotional, awkward, and hilarious. Make no doubt, *Fog of Love* is a game for adults. Part of that is because some of the scene cards deal with mature situations, which you probably won't want to role play with your kids. But part of it is because the game is more fun with people with actual relationship experience.

Fog of Love is a two-player game that plays in one to two hours and is listed for players aged 17 and up, probably due to the content. I'd add 10 years to that, otherwise you aren't going to have as much fun. And there is so much fun to be had within this box.



Fog of Love Components

This game is gorgeous. The interior box with its wonderfully designed insert, perfect for holding everything, slides into an outer box sleeve and everything feels overbuilt. Inside the box, you'll find:

- A rulebook
- A large 22" x 22" game board
- 2 Dual-sided character cards
- 2 Card holders
- 2 Player aids
- 2 Token boxes
- 16 Card dividers
- 4 Love stories (17 Chapter and Finale cards and 4 Synopsis cards)
- 110 Scene cards
- 38 Trait cards
- 60 Feature cards
- 36 Occupation cards
- 14 Destiny cards (7 each)

- 30 Tutorial cards
- 8 Choice tokens (4 each)
- 70 Personality tokens, value 1 (35 each)
- 10 Personality tokens, value 5 (5 each)

The board is well thought-out. It's pretty and the iconography on it (and the cards) is intuitive and easy to understand. There are places for each of the decks, plus homes for each of the cards for players to display. The grid for players to play out the Scenes of a Chapter is smartly laid out and the small flourishes, like those where a Choice token is placed are very nice.

Dominating the middle of the board is a section marked Personality Dimensions, which houses six dual-sided tracks, an up and down indication of how your character ranks for each of six personality markers: Discipline, Curiosity, Extroversion, Sensitivity, Gentleness, and Sincerity. The player you build will be guided by one side or the other of these traits and the decisions that the players make will tip each scale in one direction or the other.

The cards come in two sizes, a larger, wide-sized tarot card and mini-sized cards. While the colors on the backs vary among cards the art is mostly the same, a bokeh lighting effect. Very romantic! The opposite of all cards is easy to read and organized very well. By just reading from top to bottom, it's very apparent to do with each card.



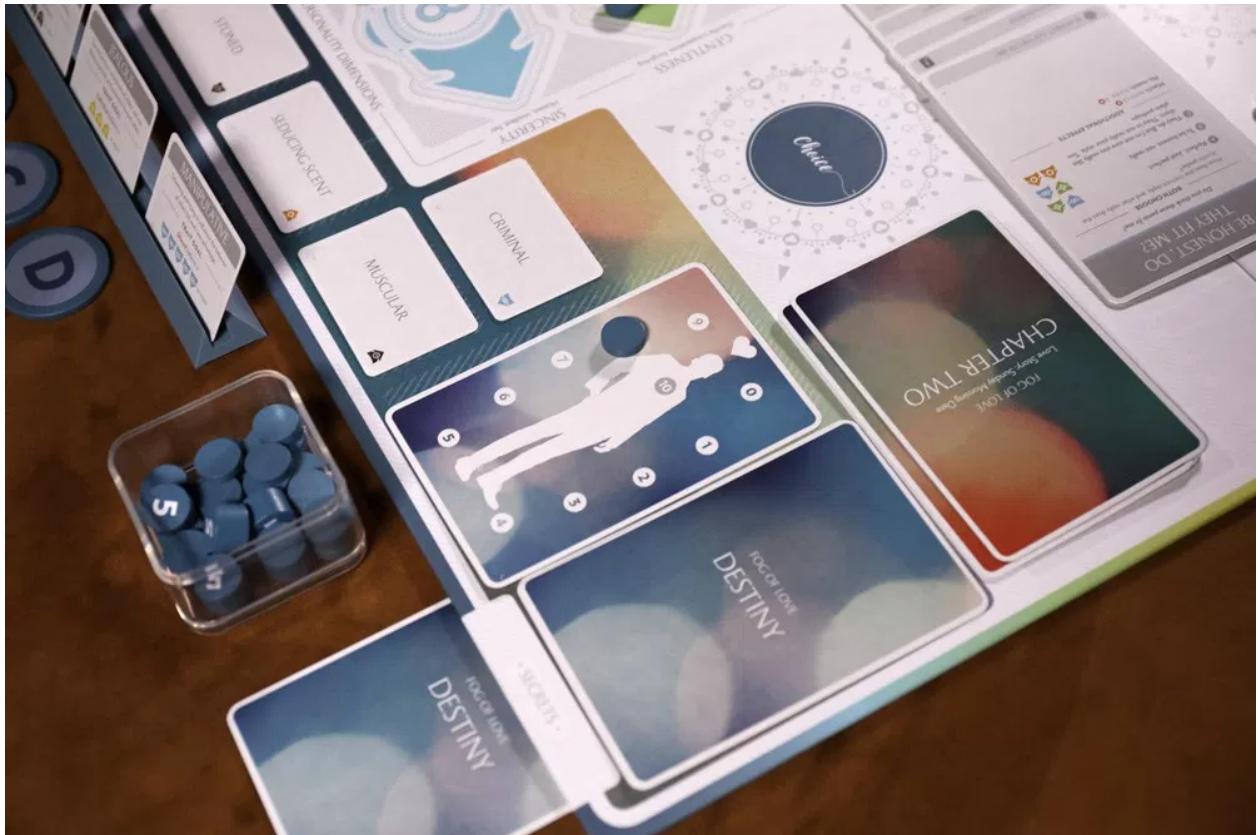
The tokens are a decent quality wood and each set comes with a nice, branded, clear plastic box to hold your pieces. The Choice tokens are good, heavy chips with a large bold letter on one side and the game's logo on the other. The trays that hold your secret Trait cards are a nice touch. It's an item that might not have been included in some games, but it's an invaluable addition to constantly remind you of your ulterior motives. *Oops, I meant to say they remind you of your character's traits.* Everything is really first-rate. It's pretty to look at and feels good in the hand.



How to Play *Fog of Love*

Read the back page of the rule book, which gives you a brief overview of setup, definition of some icons and the briefest of introductions into how the game is run and then pick up the card marked with the number “1” and begin playing. It’s that simple.

Unequivocally, *Fog of Love* has the best tutorial I’ve ever seen in a boardgame. Do what card one says and, every so often, through your first game, the tutorial will feed you another bite-sized rule instruction. It’s absolutely brilliant.



Not Enough? Want More Detailed Instruction?

Fine. I'll give you the long version, so you can better understand the game. But the tutorial really is fantastic. (And yes, the cards will get out of order as you play through the tutorial, but there are even rules for reassembling the deck so you can play through the tutorial again.)

To play *Fog of Love*, First you open the game board and orient it so one of the boxes marked "Secrets" is facing you. After deciding which Synopsis (or story) to play — "Sunday Morning Date" is the tutorial Synopsis, but the box also comes with "I Know What I Want", "High School Sweethearts" and (gulp) "We Give It a Year".

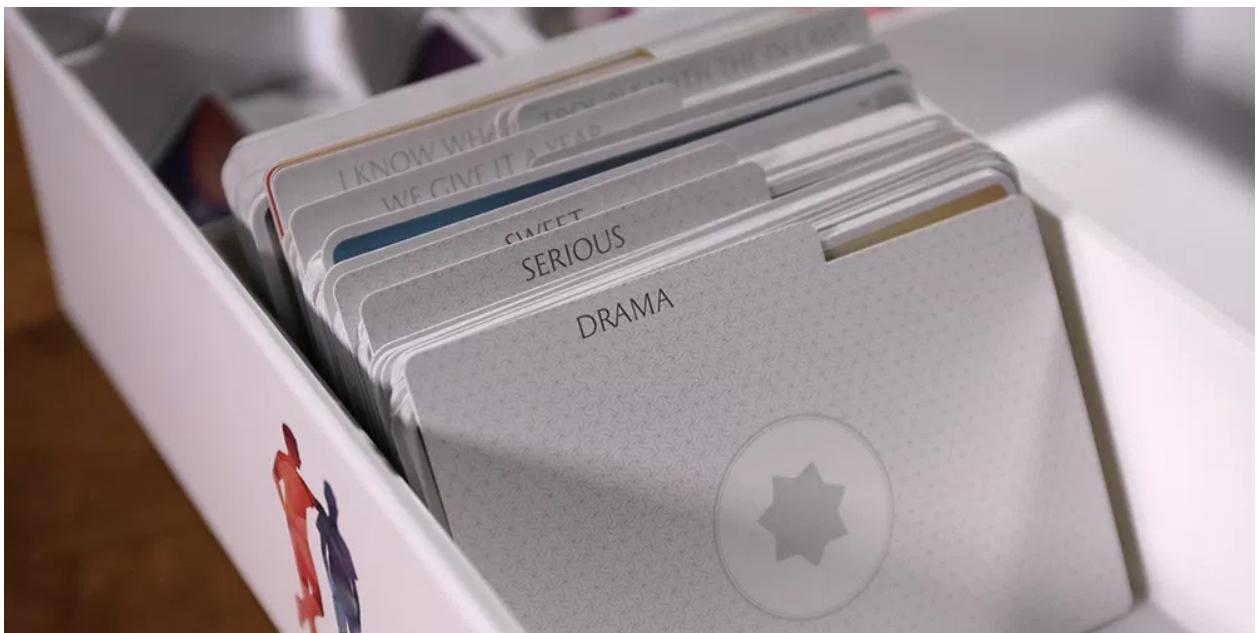
Each of these Synopses comes with a little opening direction and the challenges you'll face in the story. Additionally, there is an outline of how many chapters there are in the story and how many Scenes you'll play along with some instructions for final scoring. Each Synopsis comes with some specific Scenes that you'll have to sort and shuffle into the appropriate Scene deck: sweet, serious, or drama.



Next, shuffle the Trait, Feature, and Occupation decks and share the Destiny cards appropriate to the Synopsis. Each person will get two Destinies. There are a number of markers and tokens to put out. These are color coded to each player, as are some cards, in pink and blue. Before someone protests, the game is accessible to all types of relationships. While a handful of cards speak to a relationship between a man and a woman, there are rules that govern if you are playing as two men or two women.

Once setup is complete, you are ready to create your characters. (This does not involve three d6, pen and paper.) First, choose a side of your character card to play (which also tracks relationship satisfaction) and then deal five Trait cards to each player. These are characteristics like Perfectionist, Promiscuous, Greedy, or Impulsive. Each comes with a description and an end game goal for the Trait. Each player should secretly select three and place them in the trays in front of them.

Now, players choose their employment. Deal each player three cards from the Occupation deck. These run the gamut from Pilot to Parking Attendant. Each player chooses one and each reveals their job simultaneously.



The last cards to deal are Features. Some examples of these cards include Jiggling Legs, Crooked Teeth, Soft Skin, Strong Arms, or Old Cell Phone. Give each player five and then take turns picking cards from your hand to assign to your co-player. Each player will end up with three Features — these are the things your character may have noticed first about your co-player when you met. Each of these cards and your Occupation have a symbol that matches one of Personality Dimensions on the board. Place a marker of your color on each appropriate arrow.

The Personality Dimensions are how you track how aligned your character is with their personality. In relationships, we sometimes do or say things contrary to how we really feel and think and this track marks how true you are being to yourselves. More on how these work in a moment.

Play is nearly ready to begin, but first you must introduce yourselves. In a few sentences, give yourself a name, what you do and a little bit about you. Remember, you aren't sharing your Traits yet. Finally, according to the Synopsis card, draw five Scene cards and begin the relationship simulation.



Fog of Love is Experiential Gaming

Before you do, remember! You are not playing yourself. You are playing a fictional character! This rule will help free you up and help to avoid being judgmental after the game is over!

A Synopsis is played by working through chapters. Each chapter has some introductory flavor text, describing the situation or event. The chapter card describes which Scene deck to draw from and typically begins with a choice for each player to make that is guided by the player's hidden desires and driving forces. These are multiple choice questions and are answered by secretly picking a choice token, one of four poker chip type tokens marked A, B, C, or D, before revealing. Depending on how players respond, there may be a positive, negative, or no effect on their character cards or personality dimensions.



After resolving the Chapter, players take turns playing scenes until the chapter requirement is fulfilled. This is usually about six Scenes, each of which simulate real life relationship situations. There might be an argument at a restaurant, a visit to Ikea, a sex tape, or singing a love song in public. Most of the time, the Scene will require one or both players to make a choice that will affect one of their personality scores. Sometimes it is another effect. At these junctures, players are faced with real challenges: do you play to be true to yourself (and possibly lose the game) or be nice to your partner? Ultimately, the win/lose situation varies for each player. The Destiny cards outline your secret goal and what it will take for you to live happily ever after.

On your turn, you may play Scenes, discard and draw Scenes, talk about your relationship in broad terms, talk about how you may be happy or unhappy about decisions already made, and role play to your heart's extent. There are additional rules that govern special scenes, secrets, and a number of other nuanced situations, but that's the gist of it.

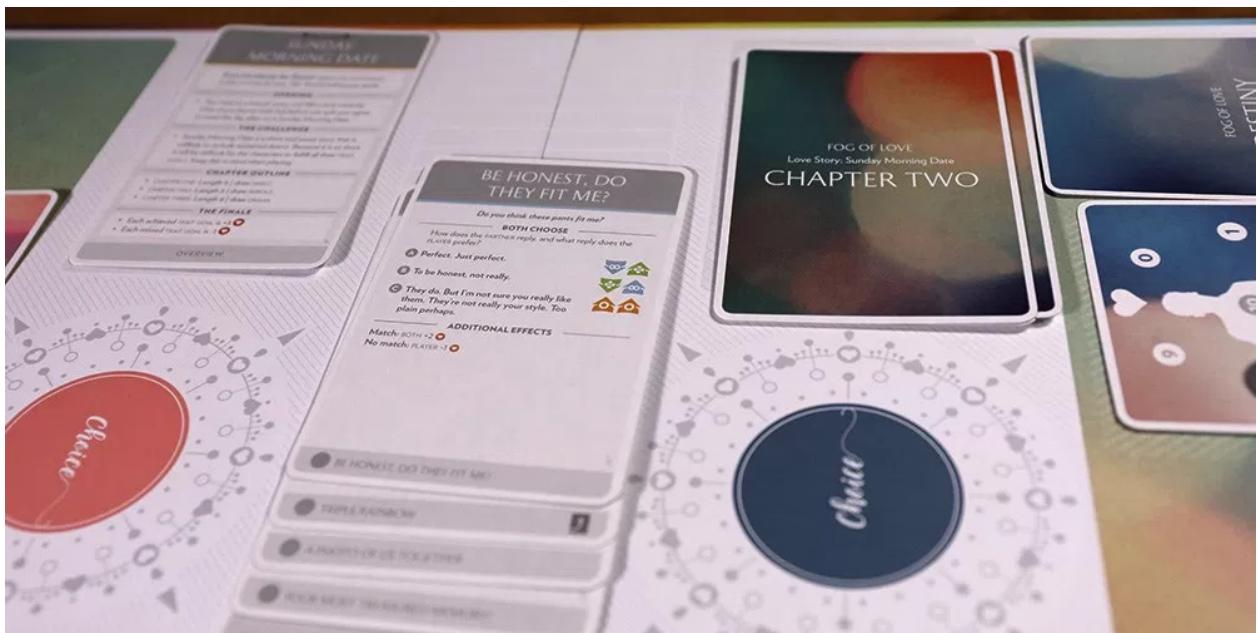
Play continues until the conditions for the Synopsis Finale are complete and players reveal whether or not they have fulfilled the conditions of their Destinies.



Why You Should Play *Fog of Love*

When I first sat down to play *Fog of Love* (at GenCon this past summer), I had a tough time wrapping my head around it. Where were my workers? How do I score points and, hey, where's the point tracker? I quickly figured out it was because *Fog of Love* is like nothing I had ever played before. Yes, there are win conditions and it's very possible to lose, but the reality of it is that *Fog of Love* is a social experiment in boardgame clothing and it is ridiculously fun to be a part of. It is absolutely brilliant.

Fog of Love is role-playing-light and there are many crutches to help you along. However, if you aren't comfortable acting a bit with another person, you may have trouble with this game. Still, don't feel as though you have to present an Oscar-worthy performance to have a good time; the cards will do most of the heavy lifting for you. Oftentimes, you don't need to do more than read the text on a Scene to play your role. However, exploring those situations with some ad-libbing can be delightfully enjoyable or, maybe, sometimes, kind of depressing. As you take on the personae of your characters, it's tough not to feel invested in this relationship you're playing and to try to make it work.



The absence of some traditional game elements makes *Fog of Love* great for people who don't traditionally game much. When I played with my wife, who isn't a huge games fan, I played as Brad, a muscular, stoner criminal with a seductive scent and she played as Linda, a budding television star with bedroom eyes ... who spoke very slowly and loudly (pick your Features wisely, it makes for some very funny moments). Because *Fog of Love* is cooperative, we just relaxed into the experience. We faced some tough decisions in that first game together. You want to fulfill the requirements of your traits, which are sometimes at odds with the other person. It's a conundrum and one you run into in real life relationships — sometimes, the only way to win is if one or both of you change a little. When it was over, we talked about Brad and Linda as if they were real people and how it was unfortunate it just didn't work out for them. It was great, but the neatest thing happened a few days later when my wife suggested we should play again.

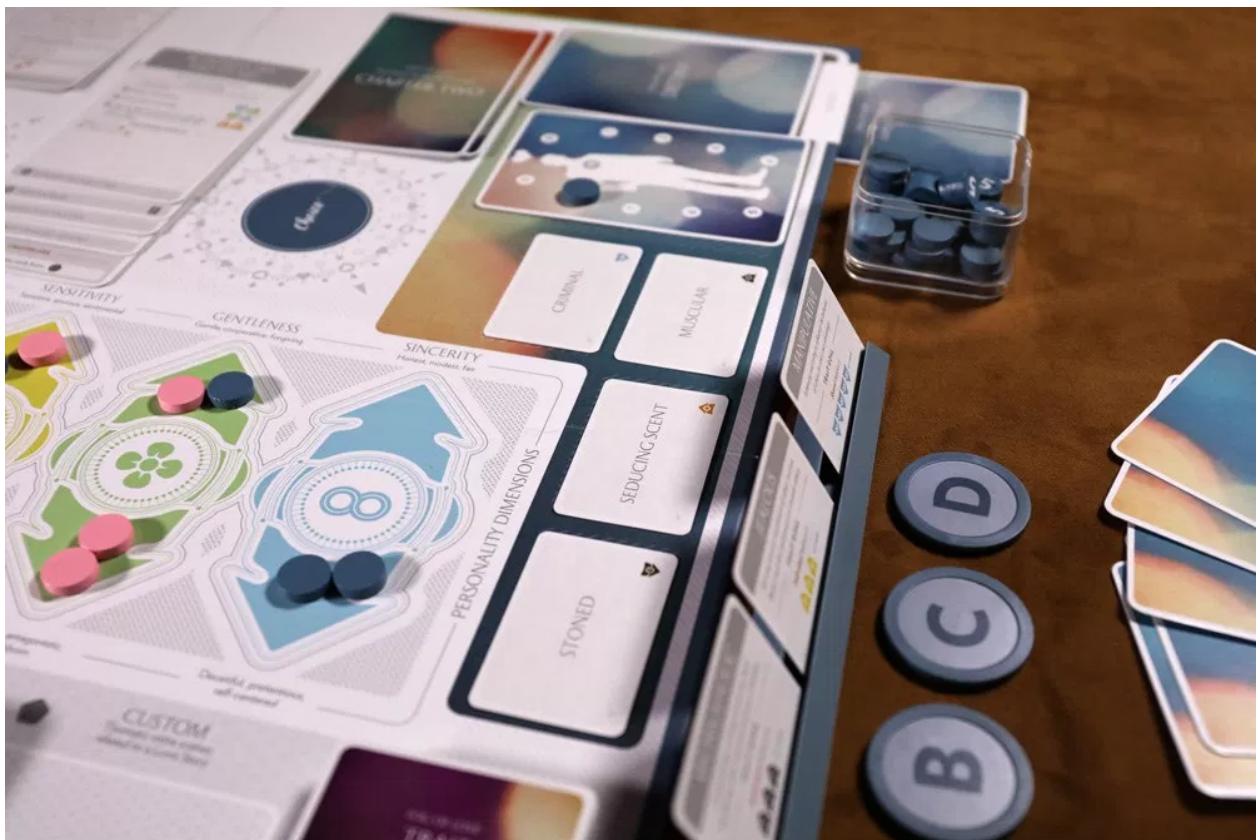
It's an interesting outcome because the game's designer, Jacob Jaskov, set out in a similar circumstance. He's an industrial designer and loves boardgames. His wife does not. So he set out to make a game that even she would love. (She's a fan of rom-coms, which is where the theme comes from.) I can't think of a better, more noble, reason to create a boardgame! He talks more about his experience [in this Reddit thread](#).



Relationship Manager 2017

Yes, it is a game, with tokens and cards and a board, but it feels more like *Relationship Manager 2017*. You have total control over these poor people's lives, the characters you are playing, and, in the same way it's interesting to deprive one of your Sims people in the video game of human contact just to see what happens, it's often great fun to make a relationship go completely off the rails in *Fog of Love*. Sabotage, as it turns out, is very enjoyable when there aren't real-life consequences.

I mentioned that the first time I played was last summer at Gen Con. I sat down to play with a guy I had never met. I'll spare him by not revealing his identity here, but he is an artist on some games you may have heard of. We played most of a full game and had the absolute best time. As we seemed to both do our best to ruin the lives of our characters (we both had horrible traits like Manipulative, Controlling, Jealous, and Workaholic), we laughed until we had tears in our eyes. When we were finished with our stormy and tumultuous relationship, we stood up and said somewhat awkward goodbyes. As I walked away, I wondered to myself why it felt awkward before realizing I had just gone through my first breakup in about 20 years.



Whether you play to beat the game and end up in a successful relationship or just let chaos reign, *Fog of Love* is wonderful. It makes you think a lot about how relationships work and what our underlying motives are. I suspect that at some point someone within psychology or one of the other social sciences is going to discover *Fog of Love* and going to use it as a tool to help people. That will be pretty cool for a game that started out as a way for a guy to get his wife more involved in his hobby.

The Future of *Fog of Love*

There are already three expansions on the way: Mismatched Love, Paranormal Romance, and Trouble with In-Laws. Each will ship with a new Love Stories, Destinies, and 30 Scene cards and will be released in May, August, and October.

If you want a copy of *Fog of Love* or any of the expansions, you'll have to go someplace you're probably not used to for boardgames: Walmart.com. *Fog of Love* is a [Walmart.com exclusive](#). That worries me a bit, that serious gamers might miss this gem because it's not a channel that hobby gamers usually go to. But do yourself a favor, go get a copy. It's beautifully made, a fantastic experience, and so much fun to play.