

Mad Libs

Mad Libs is a phrasal template word game where one player prompts others for a list of words to substitute for blanks in a story before reading aloud. The game is frequently played as a party game or as a pastime.

The game was invented in the United States, and more than 110 million copies of *Mad Libs* books have been sold since the series was first published in 1958.^[1]

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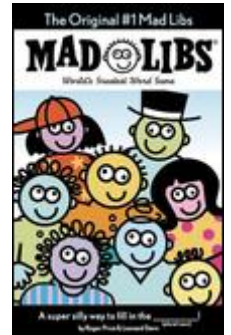
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The cover of a Stern and Price Mad Libs book

History

Mad Libs was invented in 1953^[2] by Leonard Stern^{[3][4][5]} and Roger Price.^[1] Stern and Price co-created the game, but could not agree on a name for their invention.^[1] No name was chosen until five years later (1958), when Stern and Price were eating eggs Benedict at a restaurant in New York City. While eating, the two overheard an argument at a neighboring table between a talent agent and an actor.^[1] According to Price and Stern, during the overheard argument, the actor said that he wanted to "ad-lib" an upcoming interview. The agent, who clearly disagreed with the actor's suggestion, retorted that ad-libbing an interview would be "mad".^[1] Stern and Price used that eavesdropped conversation to create, at length, the name "Mad Libs".^[1] The duo released the first *Mad Libs* book themselves in 1958. The first *Mad Libs* resembled the earlier games^[6] of consequences and exquisite corpse.

Stern was head writer and comedy director for *The Steve Allen Show*, and suggested to the show's host that guests be introduced using Mad Libs completed by the audience. Four days after an episode introduced "our guest NOUN, Bob Hope", bookstores sold out of *Mad Libs* books.^[7]

Stern and Price next partnered with Larry Sloan, a high school friend who was working as a publicist at the time, to continue publishing *Mad Libs*.^[8] Together, the three founded the publishing firm Price Stern Sloan in the early 1960s as a way to release *Mad Libs*.^[9] In addition to releasing more than 70 editions of *Mad Libs* under Sloan, the company also published 150 softcover books, including such notable titles as *How to Be a Jewish Mother*, first released in 1964; *Doodles*, which was also created by Roger Price; *The VIP Desk Diary*; and the series *World's Worst Jokes*.^{[1][8]}

Price died in 1990, and three years later, Sloan and Stern sold Price Stern Sloan, including *Mad Libs*, to the former Putnam Berkley Group, which is now known as Penguin Random House.^[8] *Mad Libs* books are still published by Penguin Random House, however, all references to Price Stern Sloan have been removed from the company's official website. Stern died at age 88 on June 7, 2011,^[10] and Sloan died on October 14, 2012.^{[1][8][9]}

More than 110 million copies of *Mad Libs* have been sold since the game series was first published in 1958.^[1]

Format

Mad Libs books contain short stories on each page with many key words replaced with blanks. Beneath each blank is specified a category, such as "noun", "verb", "place", "celebrity," "Exclamation" or "part of the body".^[11] One player asks the other players, in turn, to contribute a word of the specified type for each blank, but without revealing the context for that word. Finally, the completed story is read aloud. The result is usually comic, surreal and somewhat nonsensical.

Stern and Price's original Mad Libs book gives the following sentence as an example:^[12]

"_____! he said _____ as he jumped into his convertible
exclamation *adverb*
_____ and drove off with his _____ wife."
noun *adjective*

After completion, they demonstrate that the sentence might read:

"ouch! he said stupidly as he jumped into his convertible
cat and drove off with his brave wife."

Books

- Dysfunctional Family Therapy (Mad Libs) – ISBN 1-59609-181-9
- Night of the Living Mad Libs (Mad Libs)- ISBN 978-0843137354
- Once Upon A Mad Libs Junior (Mad Libs Junior) – ISBN 0-8431-0768-5
- Mad Libs 40th Anniversary Edition (Mad Libs) – ISBN 0-8431-7823-X
- Mad Libs 50th Anniversary Edition (Mad Libs)
- Sports Star Mad Libs Junior (Mad Libs Junior) – ISBN 0-8431-0770-7
- School Rules! Mad Libs Junior (Mad Libs Junior) – ISBN 0-8431-0853-3
- Animals, Animals, Animals! Mad Libs Junior (Mad Libs Junior) – ISBN 0-8431-0951-3
- Keepers and Losers Mad Libs (Mad Libs) – ISBN 1-59609-150-9
- Mad Libs from Outer Space (Mad Libs) – ISBN 0-8431-2443-1
- Camp Daze Mad Libs (Mad Libs) – ISBN 0-8431-2239-0
- Mad Libs for President (Mad Libs) – ISBN 0-439-69679-8
- Scooby-Doo Halloween Mad Libs Hanna-Barbera
- The Powerpuff Girls Mad Libs – ISBN 0-8431-7738-1 (2002 and 2016)
- Family Guy Mad Libs
- American Dad! Mad Libs
- Star Wars Mad Libs – ISBN 0-8431-3271-X

- [*Star Wars: The Clone Wars* Mad Libs](#) – ISBN 0-8431-3357-0
- [*Operation\(TM\)* Mad Libs](#) – ISBN 0-8431-2090-8
- [Prime-Time](#) Mad Libs
- [Indiana Jones](#) Mad Libs
- [Club Penguin](#) Mad Libs
- [*How To Train Your Dragon*](#) Mad Libs
- [*Fear Factor*](#) Mad Libs – ISBN 0-8431-0664-6
- [*Fear Factor*](#) Mad Libs: Ultimate Grossout! – ISBN 0-8431-1157-7
- [*The Penguins of Madagascar*](#) Mad Libs – ISBN 0-8431-9816-8
- [WWE](#) Mad Libs – ISBN 978-0-8431-9882-9
- Merry Christmas
- Dora the Explorer
- Trains, Trains, Trains
- Backyardigans My First Mad Libs
- [Star Trek](#) Mad Libs – ISBN 9780843183641
- [Gravity Falls](#) Mad Libs
- [*Sonic the Hedgehog*](#) Mad Libs
- Bob's Burgers Mad Libs
- Rick and Morty Mad Libs
- Don't Get Mad Libs, Get Even Funnier
- Rick and Morty's Mad Libs Joke Book
- The Original Number One Mad Libs
- 90s Mad Libs
- 80s Mad Libs

Other media

A game show called *Mad Libs*, with some connections to the game, aired on the [Disney Channel](#) in 1998 and 1999.

Several imitations of Mad Libs have been created, most of them on the [Internet](#). Imitation Mad Libs are sometimes used in educational settings to help teach the [parts of speech](#).^{[11][13]}

[Looney Labs](#) released *Mad Libs: The Game*, a card game, in 2016.

See also

- [Snowclone](#)
- [Phrasal template](#)
- [Cloze test](#)
- [Consequences \(game\)](#)
- [Exquisite corpse](#)
- [Cards Against Humanity](#)

References

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External links

- [madlibs.com](http://www.madlibs.com) (<http://www.madlibs.com>)

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