

# Art Of Noises

*an experimental game by Kim Foale*

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## Overview

ART OF NOISES is a game of abstract musical performance for 3-5 people<sup>1</sup>. Players take the role of avant-garde performers, attempting to communicate various nouns, verbs and adjectives using a variety of toy instruments.

Each player takes it in turn to select a card and perform the word on it. The other players guess which word is being performed.

At the end of the game, the person with the most points wins, and is declared the most avant-garde.

## Components

- Noise cards (white, with words on)
- Voting cards (black, with numbers 1-5)
- Placeholder cards (black, with a notch)
- ALSO NEEDED: toy instruments, such as tambourines, maracas, triangles, rain sticks, claves, metallophones...<sup>2</sup>
- ALSO NEEDED: notepaper for keeping score

## Game Sequence

### Setup

1. Give each player one set of decision cards.
2. Draw a noise card – the person most like the drawn card goes first.
3. Lay out the placeholder cards numbered 1-5, shuffle the noise cards, and deal one out next to each placeholder.

### Each round

1. The first player (performer) picks one noise card, selects the appropriately numbered voting card, and places it face down in front of them. *After the first round, the performer can pay one point to re-deal all five cards if they do not like the available options.*
2. Using either two untuned instruments (triangle, maracas) or one tuned instrument (glockenspiel), the performer creates sounds to represent the selected noise card.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It's possible to play with as many or few people as you like, however. Two players can play as a non-scoring pastime. More than five players can pair off as duos, or groups.



Figure 1: left to right: noise card, voting card, placeholder card

<sup>2</sup> Be careful with instruments you blow into like kazoos or recorders, nobody wants to contract Glandular Fever from a game.



Figure 2: How to lay out the cards

<sup>3</sup> Using acting to enhance performance is strongly discouraged. Some cards are easy to do by gesture, and much harder to do by sounds alone. This is a game about testing your musical performance activities, not your skill at Charades!

3. Other players guess in secret, placing the appropriate voting card face down in front of them when they have decided.
4. When everyone has chosen a voting card, all are flipped face up. Scores can be gained in three ways.<sup>4</sup>
  - (a) The performer scores 1 point per correct guess, as long as **at least half of the people guessing**<sup>5</sup> guessed correctly.
  - (b) Each correct guesser scores a point.
  - (c) If **half or more of the people guessing** (1 person in a 3 player game, 2 people in a 4 or 5 player game) pick something different to the performer, then the group selecting this number all score one point. Who is the performer to call them incorrect<sup>6</sup>?
5. Any card which is guessed by *anybody*, even if incorrect, gets replaced – draw a new card and place it on top.
6. Play rotates clockwise – continue for as many rounds as you like!
7. The winner of each game **must write their own word** on one of the blank cards provided. This way, every set becomes unique.

### Scoring Examples

Annie decides she is going to try and perform “red”, which is in the “2” slot. She selects her “2” card, places it face down, and begins her performance.

*Example 1.* Brenda, Cal, Davina and Eric immediately recognise her stirring rendition of an old Soviet marching tune. All four select their “2” cards. Annie scores four points, everyone else scores one. “2” is replaced with a new card.

*Example 2.* Brenda, Cal and Davina are confused if the marching tune is a Soviet one, or one they heard at a football match. “Football” is on card 3, so all select “3”. Eric selects “2”. As Brenda, Cal and Davina are in the majority, they are therefore correct. They all score one point, nobody else scores anything. Cards “2” and “3” are replaced.

*Example 3.* Something goes horribly wrong in the performance with unintentional semiotics flying around like a drunk pelican. Brenda picks “2”, Cal “3”, Davina “4”, and Eric “5”. Brenda was the only correct guesser, and gets one point. Nobody else scores. Cards 2, 3, 4 and 5 are replaced.

<sup>4</sup> That said, this game is very much a toolkit – make your own scoring system or cards (children’s flash cards are recommended), bring your own instruments, adapt it however you wish.

<sup>5</sup> i.e. not the performer: 1 person in a 3 player game, 2 people in a 4 or 5 player game

<sup>6</sup> In a 5 player game it’s possible to have more than one card score, if the performer and two others pick one card, and the remaining two people pick a different one together. In this case, the performer would score two and everyone else one point.

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