Happy Birthday, Robot!

DREAMATION 2010 DRAFT

You and your friends are about to tell a story about Robot. The world is exciting, scary, and new for Robot. Robot may meet new friends or learn many new things about the world. Robot's world can be different each time you play. Even Robot can be different each time you play, but the story always begins the same way: "Happy birthday, Robot!"

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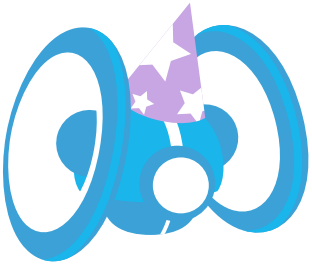

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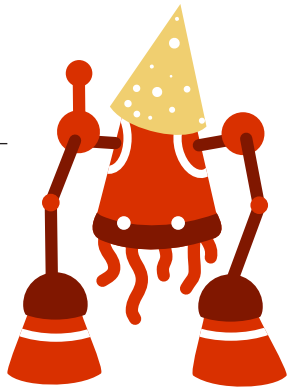
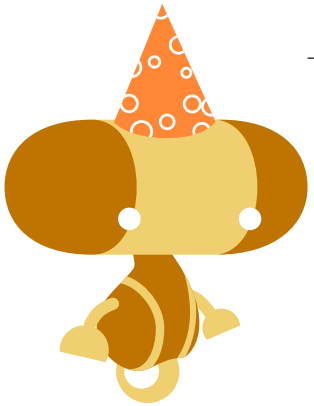
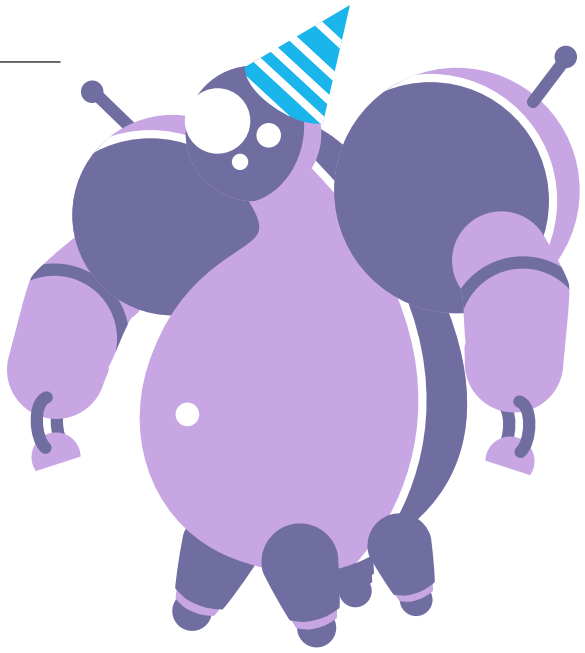
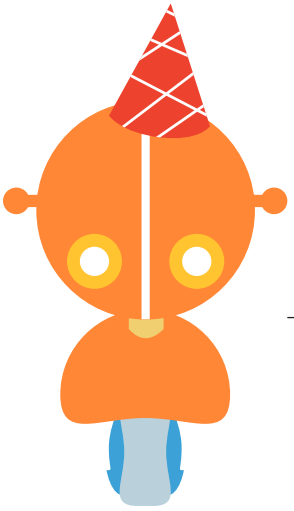








Chapter 1: Robot Stories



Here are some more stories that came from actual players. The stories are very different from each other because each group was different. Sometimes they're pretty silly... Okay, they're all pretty silly... but still lots of fun to make. Check out these tales and in the next chapter you can learn how you and your friends can make your own Robot story.

Happy Birthday, Robot!

Robot awakens and sings until the sun sets.

Sad and lonely, Robot's song echoes, hauntingly, but something answers his song.

Surprised, Robot gleefully answers the song and intently listens to... a duck!

"Will you be my friend forever?" Duck asks hopefully, and Robot nods enthusiastically.

Duck dances a happy interpretive jig, and Robot begins singing to everybody.

Nobody answered Robot's call for new friends until a quacking pig flew by.

Pig quacked a greeting song, and Duck and Robot were happy, but then everyone slept.

Robot, Duck and Pig snore-quacked loudly and everyone dreamed they were happy robots flying together with stars.

Everyone except Robot slept until the wee morning, and Duck and Pig made breakfast for sad Robot.

Sad Robot was happy he had friends like these.

But Robot still could not fly.

That night Pig and Duck taught him.

THE END

(From Colin Creitz, John Daniels and Kathy Daniels)

"Happy Birthday, Robot!

"Congratulations, you get to become a real boy!"

The Professor cheerfully continues: "One catch: A boy must take your place!"

Robot knows Bobby wants to be a robot, but he is grounded.

But it's Bobby's birthday and he loudly wishes real hard.

Professor hears Bobby's wish to become a real robot.

Professor convinces Bobby's parents to unground him and allow the procedure, but it might be temporary.

Bobby and Robot sit in the Switcheroo Machine, but it sputters loudly.

Robot waits anxiously while Professor kicks it back to life.

Bobby becomes Robot, Robot becomes Bobby, and Professor says with joy: Hello, Nobel Prize!

Bobby likes flying around town with Robot's very shiny rocket legs.

Robot likes eating pizza and playing with Bobby's little brother.

Bobby misses pizza. Robot misses flying. They switch back.

THE END

(From Megan Raley and Daniel Solis

Happy Birthday, Robot!

Robot is very small, but has big heart.

Robot misses friend Melissa, and she misses him as well.

Robot finds Melissa at the Spaceport and Melissa is crying because her dolly is missing.

Robot knows where dolly is, but cannot reach her without John's help.

Robot asks John for help and John takes Melissa and Robot up into his spaceship.

Robot is very excited, but still needs help to find Melissa's lost dolly.

John, Melissa and Robot all see dolly and she's almost in reach of the spaceship!

John says "Hold on tight!" and pushes the throttle to the max!

The spaceship goes ZOOM! and dolly is recovered, much to Melissa's relief.

With John's help, Robot saves the day.

THE END

(From Ryan Macklin & Justin Smith)

Happy Birthday, Robot!

Robot laughs and dances the tango, but by himself.

Robot's presents and the ponies are missing, but he isn't too worried.

Robot thinks his friends--all but Natasha--rode the ponies away to the hills.

Maybe Natasha, being a jerk, hid Robot's presents for a terrible surprise, but Robot loves her anyway.

But now, Natasha comes bounding out of her cave, shouts "surprise," throws confetti, and hugs Robot sweetly.

ROBOT: Are you teaching me a lesson that I shouldn't care about presents?

ROBOT: Or are you just being a big MEANIE?!?!

EXEUNT, DANCING THE TANGO

THE END

(From Steve Lawson)

Happy Birthday, Robot!

There was a robot, but he was rusty.

So, for his birthday, he cried oil tears.

Robot ran faster than ever before.

He ran home and found rust-removal spray.

Robot took a rust removal shower and scrubbed himself shiny.

Robot felt better than ever, so he baked his favorite cake.

Robot put candles on his cake and lit them.

Robot looked and closed his eyes, but his cake moved.

Robot screamed and his cake jumped, screaming "don't eat me!"

Robot was confused, but agreed, and they sat and talked and laughed.

Robot was going to wish for more friends before the cake came alive.

Now, he didn't have to.

And Robot never cried again.

THE END

(From Marc Majcher, Kristin Firth and Ben Johnson)

Happy Birthday, Robot!

Robot's family of kittens has gathered many balls of yarn.

Robot's kittens want milk, but they also want to hunt!

"Ack!" says Robot. "I'm made of tuna cans!"

Robot finds a bush of catnip nearby and quickly knits several tiny toy mice.

Robot thinks this was a good first day of kitten school.

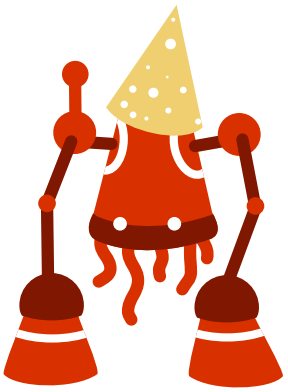
Robot's a cool cat!

THE END
(From Megan Raley)

Chapter 2: Getting Ready to Play

Things You Need to Play

These are some of the things you need to play this game.



Players

You need at least three players to play. You can play Happy Birthday, Robot! with five players or more. The more players, the longer the game lasts, so five players is probably more than enough. At the end of the book, optional rules explain how to play with only one or two players, but read the basic rules first to learn how to play.

Dice

The group needs at least three dice. Ideally, use special Robot dice that have words on their sides instead of numbers. Two sides have the word AND with an arrow pointing to the right. Another two sides have the word BUT with an arrow pointing to the left. The remaining sides are BLANK.



How many dice do you need? At least three dice ensure a playable game, but it is handy to have a bunch around. Around 10 should do you fine. These rules assume you have a bunch. If you don't have Robot dice, use regular six-sided dice that you might have lying around the house. 1-2 are BLANK. 3-4 are AND. 5-6 are BUT.

Coins

The group needs about twenty coins. These coins help keep track of how close you are to the end of the game. Use any kind of coin, as long as each coin has two different sides: HEADS and TAILS.



Notebook and Pencil

The group needs a notebook and a pencil. As you play with your friends, you create a new story together about Robot. You write that story in a notebook that you all share. You can write on a scrap of paper or type it into a computer.

The First Sentence

The oldest player writes the first sentence. In a normal game, the first sentence of the story is "Happy Birthday, Robot!" From there, the story is different every time you play.

Storyteller and Neighbors

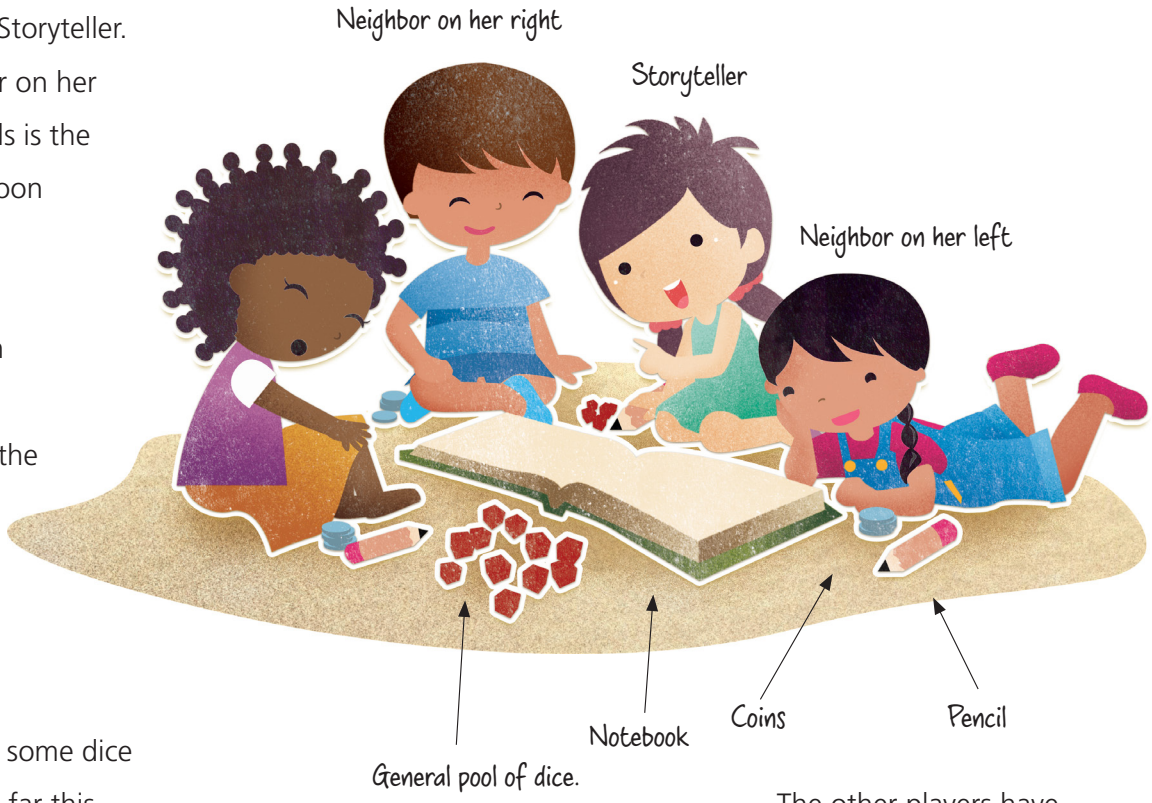
When you and your friends play *Happy Birthday, Robot!*, you take turns. The youngest player takes the first turn. Turns continue clockwise around the table. Each turn produces a new sentence in the story.

When it is your turn, you are called the Storyteller. That means you are the one who rolls dice and writes the first words of the sentence.

Meanwhile, the players to your left and right are called your Neighbors. Depending on your dice roll, your Neighbors may add words to the story after you. The Neighbor to your right goes first. Then the Neighbor to your left goes second.

When your turn is complete, the player on your left takes the next turn. Once everyone has a turn, that completes a round. You and your friends play through a series of rounds that create a whole story.

This illustration shows a game in progress. The girl with pigtails is currently the Storyteller. The boy is the Neighbor on her Right. The girl in overalls is the Neighbor on her left. Soon Overalls-Girl will be the Storyteller, then Pigtails will be the Neighbor on her right and the girl in the purple shirt will be the Neighbor on the left.



The Storyteller has some dice she's rolled and kept so far this turn. She's in the process of telling her part of the story.

The other players have earned varying amounts of coins during the previous turns.

Chapter 3: How to Play



The next five steps are what you do when it is your turn. The sections after that describe some of the events that can happen in your turn and at the end of the game.

Step 1: Roll some Dice.

When it's your turn, roll up to three dice at a time. That means you can roll as many dice as you want, but only in sets of one, two, or three dice at a time. You can keep rolling more dice again, and again.

Try to get as many BLANKs as you can. Keep each die that results in a BLANK. You can keep on rolling more dice from the general pool, hoping to get more BLANKs. There is no limit to how many BLANKs you can collect.

Any ANDs go to the Neighbor on your right. So, if a die results in an AND, pass that die to him.

Any BUTs go to the Neighbor on your left. So, if a die results in a BUT, pass that die over to her.

There are three ways you can stop rolling:

At any time, you can decide to stop rolling.

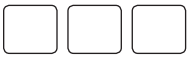
If the Neighbor on your right gets four or more dice, you must stop rolling.

If the Neighbor on your left gets four or more dice, you must stop rolling.

Once you stop rolling, continue to step 2.

EXAMPLE

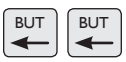
It is the beginning of your turn. You take three dice and roll them all. You get:



You get three BLANKs! Great! You decide to press your luck and roll three more dice.



Aww. No such luck. You pass the two ANDs to the Neighbor on your right. You pass the single BUT to the Neighbor on your left. You're now only two more AND dice away from being forced to stop rolling, so you decide to only roll two dice this time.



That's two more BUTs. Oh well, you decide not to push your luck any further. Now, the final tally:

The Neighbor on your left has three dice.

You have three dice.

The Neighbor on your right has two dice.

Step 2: Begin a sentence.

When you're done rolling, write the first words of a sentence in Robot's story. You may write as many words as you rolled blanks in Step 1. You can say fewer words, if you wish, just no more than that.

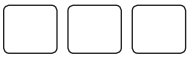
You may use the word "Robot" once for as a free word, because Robot is the star of the story. That's capital R, Robot. As a Storyteller, you can always add the word "Robot" to the story, even if you don't have enough dice to add any more words.

The possessive form, "Robot's," is also a free word. It might refer to something Robot owns, someone Robot knows, or someone to whom Robot has some kind of relationship.

The plural, "robots," or lowercase "robot" do not count as free words because these do not specifically refer to Robot, the star of our story.

EXAMPLE

Continuing from the example in Step 1, you have three BLANKs.



Meaning you can write three words plus your free word: "Robot." Here are some sentences you could write.

Robot sees a flower.

Robot floats on water.

Robot's eyes are rusty.

Starlight shines on Robot.

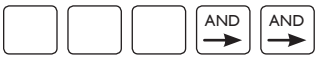
Robot lives for love.

Step 3: The Neighbor on your right can add to this sentence.

The Neighbor on your right adds words to this sentence first. She cannot add more words than she has AND dice. She may say fewer words than that, but no more. She may add words anywhere she likes: before your words, after your words or even between your words. However, she cannot rearrange or change your words. She may use the word "**and**" once as a free word. She doesn't have to use it, but it's always available as a free word, even if she has no dice with which to add more words.

EXAMPLE

Let's say you rolled five dice and got:



That means you can say three words.

Then the Neighbor on your right can add two new words to your sentence, plus her free word: **and**. Here are some things she could add to the sentences in the previous example. Her contributions are highlighted.

Robot sees a flower **and a starship**.

Robot **happily** floats on **frozen** water.

Robot's eyes are rusty **from crying**.

Starlight **from television** shines on Robot.

Robot lives for love **and playing tennis**.

Step 4: The Neighbor on your left can add to this sentence.

The Neighbor on your left adds words to this sentence last. He cannot add more words than he has BUT dice. He may say fewer words than that, but no more. He may add words anywhere he likes. Just like the Neighbor on your right, he can add his own words before, after or within the current sentence. He cannot rearrange or change the existing words, though. He may use the word "**but**" once as a free word. He doesn't have to use it, but it's always available as a free word, even if he has no dice with which to add any more words. It's probably pretty hard to make that work on its own, though.

EXAMPLE

Let's say you rolled eight dice and got:



That means you can say three words.

Then the Neighbor on your right can continue or add two words plus her free word: **and**.

Then the Neighbor on your left can continue or add to that with three words and his free word: **but**. Here are some things he could add to the sentences in the previous examples. His contributions are highlighted.

Robot sees a flower and a starship **that is crashing**.

Robot happily floats on frozen **but turbulent** water **during hurricanes**.

Robot's eyes are rusty from crying, **but he is relieved**.

Starlight from **antique** television shines on **barren** Robot **wastelands**.

Robot lives for love and playing tennis, **but gets no loves**.

A Few Notes on Grammar

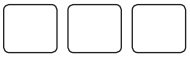
All players are free to play around with punctuation in a sentence, adding commas, periods, exclamation points, quotes and colons wherever they wish, as long as the rest of the group thinks it makes sense. Speaking of which, by the end of the turn, the sentence should be complete. In other words, it should end in a period and have at least a semi-complete thought in it. Also, contractions like "isn't" and "I'm" count as one word, so use them wisely. Aside from these notes, this game isn't picky about grammar.

Step 5: Collect some coins and end your turn.

Collect one coin for each word you added. Your Neighbors do not collect coins. Just you, the Storyteller. Also, you do not collect coins for saying free words. When you collect your coins, keep them HEADS. You'll see how to use these coins in the next section.

EXAMPLE

For example, if you rolled three BLANKs,



and said

"Robot sees a flower"

then you can collect



That's one coin for each of the three words you said, but doesn't count "Robot" because that is a free word.

At the end of your turn, everyone loses all the dice they collected. That means you must return all your dice to the general pool. The Neighbors on your left and right should also return their dice to the pool, too. Everyone begins their turn with no dice in their possession.

After you end your turn, the sentence you and your Neighbors created cannot be changed. The Neighbor on your left becomes the Storyteller and begins a new sentence of the story. The round continues until everyone has a turn as the Storyteller. When everyone has a turn as the Storyteller, a new round begins.

Giving Other Players Free Words

After your turn, you may have some HEADS coins (H) to the current Storyteller. You can't do anything with those coins yourself, you may only give them to the current Storyteller, whoever that may be at this time. You can give these coins to her at the beginning of her turn, during her turn, or at the end of her turn. You may give her as many coins as you like.

Giving the Storyteller coins lets her say more words. When you give a HEADS coin (H)to the Storyteller, flip the coin over so it's TAILS (T). From now on, that player gets one more free word when she's the Storyteller. She'll get one free word for each TAILS coin she owns, even if she doesn't roll any blanks.

Players keep any TAILS coins for the rest of the game. They cannot be given away, nor can anyone take them away. The current Storyteller may ask for some coins, but it's up to you to decide whether you want to share them. You may not give coins to anyone but the current Storyteller.

EXAMPLE

You have two HEADS coins have you collected from a previous turn as the Storyteller.

H H

It's another player's turn to be the Storyteller now. She rolled only one BLANK.



That means she can contribute one word to the sentence, plus the free word "Robot" which is always available to Storytellers. She's having trouble thinking of something worthwhile to add by only saying "Robot _____" She writes:

"Robot floats"

You want to hear more from her, so you give the current Storyteller two coins.

H H

Those coins are immediately turned over so they are TAILS

T T

With that gift, she can write two more words in her sentence whenever she is the Storyteller. With those two extra words, she continues her contribution

"Robot floats on water."

The next time she is the Storyteller, another player gives her H H H. These get turned over to be TAILS: T T T. This addition gives her a total of T T T T T. That's five TAILS coins. She writes five more free words. The three coins she just received plus the two coins you gave her earlier add up to five coins. So, even if she didn't roll *any* blanks, she could still write five free words in addition to the word "Robot."

How the Story Ends

If you or any other player has ten or more coins, then this is the last normal round of play. The game does not end immediately, though. This is just a signal that the story is going to start wrapping up. Continue this last round until it is complete.

It is possible to have more than ten coins at the end of the game, but having ten or more always signals that this is the last round.

EXAMPLE OF ENDING WITH TEN COINS

You're the Storyteller and you have seven coins:



Then you added three more words, giving you three more coins:



Three more coins leaves you with a total of ten coins. That signals the end of the story. The rest of the players take their turns until the round ends.

EXAMPLE OF ENDING WITH MORE THAN TEN COINS

Let's say the current Storyteller has seven coins:



Then you give the Storyteller two more coins:



Then another player gives her three more coins:



That would give the Storyteller a total of twelve coins. That's more than ten coins, so that signals the end of the story. The rest of the players take their normal turns until the round ends.

The Epilogue

The Epilogue is a special round at the end of the game, where the story wraps up in with one last sentence from each player. It's your chance to bring the story to a natural conclusion.

Each player writes one last sentence to end the story. Each player takes turns writing their last sentence. Whoever has the most coins goes first. Whoever has the next most coins goes next. If there is a tie, whoever is younger wins the tie. Continue until the player with the fewest coins ends the story.

You do not have to roll for your last sentence. Instead, you write one word per coin., regardless of whether it is TAILS or HEADS. You may also use "Robot," "Robot's," "and," "but" as you prefer.

EXAMPLE

Let's say there are three players. At the end of the game, one has ten coins, another has five coins, and the last player has only four coins.

The player with the most coins (ten) says,

"Robot realizes that he is experiencing true love for Sarah's Robette."

That sentence is 11 words, but "Robot" is a free word.

The player with five coins goes next. She says,

"Sarah blesses Robot's marriage to Robette."

The player with four coins goes last. He says,

"Robot flies away with Robette."

Then the story ends.

Chapter 4: Example of Play

This is a full example of play for *Happy Birthday, Robot!* There are three players in this example: You, Adam and Beth. The three players are arranged around the table like so.

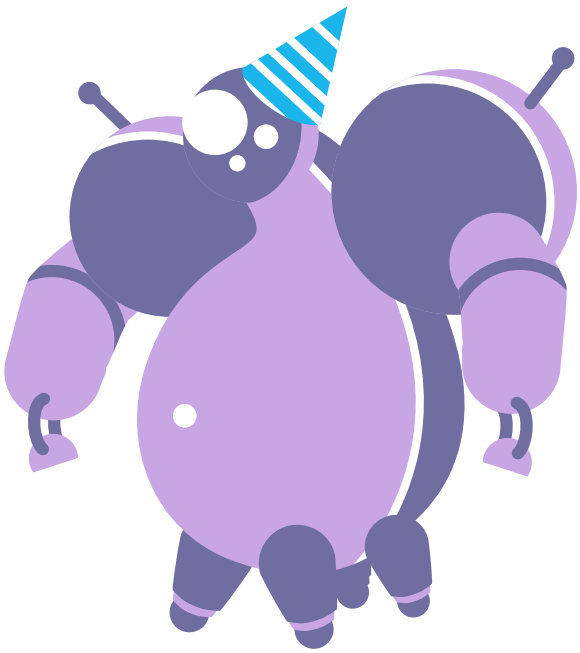
[Illustration of Table. First-person perspective. You facing Adam on your right. Beth on your left.]

Getting Ready

The group gathered several dice, the notebook, and the other items needed to play. Beth is the oldest of the group, so she writes the first sentence of the story in the notebook:

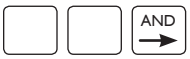
"Happy Birthday, Robot!"

Adam is the youngest, so takes the first turn as Storyteller.

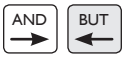


Round 1
Adam's Turn

Adam is the Storyteller. Beth sits to his right. You sit to his left. Adam rolls three dice.



Not bad! He keeps the two BLANK dice and passes the AND die to Beth. Adam decides to push his luck a little more and rolls just two more dice.



Aw man, no BLANKs this time. He passes the AND die to Beth and BUT die to you. Adam decides to roll three more dice.



That's another BLANK for Adam to keep! He passes the two AND dice to Beth, which gives her four dice and means Adam can't roll any more. But at least he got one more BLANK out of the gamble.

Now he, Beth, and you write the next sentence of the story. Adam goes first, since he's the Storyteller. He can write three words because he has three BLANK dice. He may also use the free word "Robot," but decides not to do so this time. Instead, he'll begin an open-ended statement, spoken by a character yet to be established.

"Congratulations, you get

Beth adds her words next. She gets to add four words because she got four dice from Adam's rolls. She may also use the free word "and," but decides not to for now. Instead, she continues this statement.

"Congratulations, you get to become a real

Finally, you add your contribution to the sentence. Because you received only one die from Adam's roll, you can add only one word. You may also add "but" as a free word, but decide not to do so at this time. Instead, you add a single word to the sentence, feeling like it's fairly obvious the rest of the group is pushing towards a Pinocchio story.

"Congratulations, you get to become a real boy!"

That completes the sentence. At the end of the turn, Adam collects 3 coins because he added three words to the story.

Adam has (H) (H) (H).

You have 0 Coins.

Beth has 0 Coins.

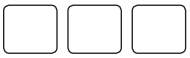
Adam, Beth and you return all your dice to the general pool. The game continues with your turn.

Your Turn

You are the Storyteller. Beth sits to your left. Adam sits to your right. You roll three dice and get:



Not great, but at least you got one BLANK. You keep the BLANK and pass the ANDs to Adam. You decide you can handle the risk and roll three more dice.



Fantastic! You have now collected a total of four BLANKs. Feeling bold, you roll three more dice. Unfortunately, this time you get:



You pass all those dice to Beth. Okay, one more time. You roll three more dice.



Nuts. Adam has a total of five dice. That means you must stop rolling now.

Now you, Adam, and Beth write the next sentence of the story. You go first, since you are the Storyteller. You can write four words because you now possess four BLANK dice. You may also use the free word "Robot," but decides not to do so this time. You notice that the last sentence ended up being a statement, in quotes, so you decide to establish who said that.

The Professor cheerfully continues:

Now we know that a character named "The Professor" said those previous two lines, probably to Robot. Adam adds his words next. He has five words to use, plus "but" he could add as a free word. He declines this liberty, though. TIstead, he throws a slightly different monkey wrench into the plot.

The Professor cheerfully continues: "One catch: A boy must

Beth, her interest piqued, now adds the last words to this sentence. Curious about what a boy "must" do in order for Robot to become a real boy, she takes inspiration from the movie "Freaky Friday."

The Professor cheerfully continues: "One catch: A boy must take your place!"

Dun-dun-DUN! Shocking twist! In order for Robot to become a real boy (which we're presuming for now is something Robot wants in the first place) he has to swap places with a real boy. The plot thickens. At the end of the turn, you collect 4 coins because you added four words to the story.

Adam has (H) (H) (H).

You have (H) (H) (H) (H).

Beth has 0 Coins.

Adam, you, and Beth return your dice to the general pool. The game continues with Beth's turn.

Beth's Turn

Beth is the Storyteller. You sit to her right. Adam sits to her left. Beth rolls three dice and gets:



Dang, no BLANKs. She passes these dice to you. Beth rolls three more dice. She might bust if you get a fourth die, but she's willing to risk it to get at least one BLANK. Unfortunately, she gets:



Nuts! She passes those dice to Adam. Not good luck so far, but at least she can keep rolling. All right, one last chance. She rolls and gets...



Oh well, she takes it all in stride. She passes the ANDs to you and the BUT to Adam. Adam has five dice. You have four dice. Both of these things means Beth cannot continue rolling.

Now she, Adam, and you write the next sentence of the story. Beth is the Storyteller, so she goes first. Sadly, she has no BLANKs, so she can't add any words to the sentence except the free word "Robot." You and Adam help her, though. You and Adam each give her one HEADS coin.



These coins are turned over to be TAILS.



Beth now has two TAILS coins, so she gets two free words. She starts the sentence with these words:

Robot knows Bobby

You add your words next. You got four dice from Beth's rolls, so that means you can say four free words. This, in addition to the word "and," which you can say as a free word. You decide not to use that free word this time, though. Instead, you add:

Robot knows Bobby wants to be a robot

Finally, Adam adds his contribution to the sentence. Adam got five dice from Beth's rolls. That means he has five words he can add to the sentence. Plus, he can say "but" as a free word. He adds:

Robot knows Bobby wants to be a robot, but Bobby is grounded.

That completes the sentence. At the end of the turn, Beth doesn't collect new coins, because she didn't add any words from her dice. However, she still has the two coins you and Adam gave to her.

Adam has 

.

You have 

.

Beth has 

.

Adam, you, and Beth return the dice to the general pool. This ends the first round. The second round begins with Adam's turn.

Round 2
Adam's Turn

Adam is the Storyteller. Beth sits to his right. You sit to his left. Adam rolls three dice and gets:



No BLANKs! No worries, there's still another chance. He passes the two ANDs to Beth. He passes the BUT to you. Adam rolls three more dice.



Sweet! That's three BLANKs to keep for this turn. Adam rolls one more time.



That's another BLANK for him, but two more dice to pass to Beth. Beth now has four dice, meaning Adam cannot roll any more this turn.

Now Adam, Beth, and you write the next sentence of the story. Adam is the Storyteller, so he goes first. He has a total of four dice, so he can add the first four words of this sentence. Adam already knows what he wants to say, and it only takes three words, though. So, he decides not to use his full allotment of dice this time.

It's Bobby's birthday

Beth gets her chance to add words to the sentence now. She has four dice, so she can add four words. She may also add the free word "and." She likes where the story is going so far, with Robot and Bobby having parallel birthdays. She adds:

It's Bobby's birthday **and he wishes real hard**.

Now you can add your words to the sentence. Or word, to be more accurate, since you only have one die. That means you can add only one new word to the sentence, plus "but" as a free word. You decide to squeeze in those two words at the beginning and in the middle of the sentence.

But it's Bobby's birthday and he **loudly** wishes real hard.

Now the sentence is complete. Adam was the Storyteller, and he added three new words to the sentence, so he gets three coins.

Adam has (H) (H) (H) (H) (H).

You have (H) (H) (H).

Beth has (T) (T).

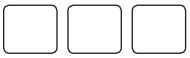
Adam, you, and Beth return your dice to the general pool. The game continues with your turn.

Your Turn

You are the Storyteller. Beth sits to your left. Adam sits to your right. You roll three dice and get:



Ouch! Oh well, that's all right. You pass the AND to Adam. You pass the BUTs to Beth. You decide to roll three more dice:



Wow, that's great! You keep those three dice for yourself. You roll three more dice again, hoping to repeat your luck. Unfortunately, you get:



When you pass those three dice to Adam, that gives him a total of four dice, meaning you cannot continue rolling.

Now you, Adam, and Beth write the next sentence of the story. You go first, since you are the Storyteller. You can write three words because you have three dice. You may also use the free word "Robot," but decide not to do so. You want to focus on Bobby for now, especially on his birthday. You begin the sentence:

Bobby's wish to

That's a very open-ended way to begin the sentence, but you trust Adam to come up with something interesting. Indeed, Adam uses his four dice to establish what Bobby's wish is.

Bobby's wish to become a real robot

And finally, Beth has two dice, so she can add two more words to the sentence. She could also add the word "but" as a free word, but decides not to do so. She decides instead to bring the Professor back into the story with this sentence. She adds:

Professor hears Bobby's wish to become a real robot.

She is especially amused that Professor doesn't seem to have a proper name, just the title Professor. And that completes the sentence.

You were the Storyteller this turn, and you added three new words, so you get three more coins for your collection.

Adam has (H) (H) (H) (H) (H).

You have (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H).

Beth has (T) (T).

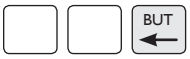
Adam, you and Beth return your dice to the general pool. The game continues with Beth's turn.

Beth's Turn

Beth is the Storyteller. You sit to her right. Adam sits to her left. Beth rolls three dice and gets:



She's getting worried about her bad luck, since this is how she began her last turn. Oh well, she passes the three dice to you and decides to roll three more dice. She might bust by getting a fourth AND, but wants to get at least one BLANK. Turns out her risk was worth it! She gets:



Not bad! She passes the BUT to Adam, and keeps the two BLANKs for herself. Beth likes to play it risky, so she rolls three more dice. She gets:



Wow, she's really cutting it close here. She keeps the single BLANK and passes the BUT to Adam. If you or Adam gets another die, she has to stop rolling. Unfazed, she goes all out with three more dice:



Another BLANK! She keeps that for herself. She passes the AND to you and passes the BUT to Adam. That gives you and Adam four dice each, so Beth must stop rolling.

Now she, Adam, and you write the next sentence of the story. Beth is the Storyteller, so she goes first. She has four BLANKs, so she can write four words. Her two TAILS also give her two more free words. She has "Robot" as a free word, too, if she wants it. That's a lot of choices! She begins:

Professor convinces Bobby's parents to unground

Obviously, she wants to move the story past this grounding. You add your words next. You have four dice, so you can say four free words, in addition to the usual free word: **and**. You add:

Professor convinces Bobby's parents to unground **him and allow the procedure**

Adam adds his words to the sentence. Adam has four dice, so he has four words he can add to the sentence. Plus, he can say "**but**" as a free word. He decides to add another twist to the plot.

Professor convinces Bobby's parents to unground him and allow the procedure, **but it might be temporary**.

That completes the sentence. Beth added six words to the story, but two of those words were free because of her TAILS coins. The four words she got from her actual roll give her four new coins.

Adam has (H) (H) (H) (H) (H).

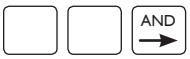
You have (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H).

Beth has (H) (H) (H) (H) (T) (T).

Adam, you, and Beth return the dice to the general pool. This ends the second round. The third round begins with Adam's turn.

Round 3
Adam's Turn

Adam is the Storyteller. Beth sits to his right. You sit to his left. Adam rolls three dice and gets:



Two BLANKs! Sweet. Not a bad start to the turn. He passes the to Beth and keeps the BLANKs for himself. Adam rolls three more dice and gets:



Oof. Maybe his luck isn't so good after all. He passes the three dice to you. He rolls one more time, hoping to get some more BLANKs this time.



Rotten luck! He passes those dice to Beth, which gives her four dice, so he must stop rolling.

Now Adam, Beth, and you write the next sentence of the story. Adam is the Storyteller, so he goes first. He has two dice, so he can begin the sentence with two words. He has "Robot" available to him as a free word, but what he has planned would call for one more word. He asks you if he can have a coin and you give it to him. That coin is turned over to be TAILS. That coin gives him an extra free word for this turn and every turn hereafter. He starts the sentence:

Bobby and Robot sit

Beth can now add words to the sentence. She has four dice, so she can add four words. She may also add the free word "and." She decides not to do so, though. She adds:

Bobby and Robot sit in the Switcheroo Machine,

Lastly, you add your words to the sentence. You have three dice from Adam's rolls, meaning you have three words, plus "but" as a free word. You use these words to add a little tension to the scene.

Bobby and Robot sit in the Switcheroo Machine, but it sputters loudly.

Now the sentence is complete. Adam added four words to the sentence, but one was the free word "Robot" and another came from a TAILS coin you gave him. That leaves the two words he got from rolling BLANKs, which means he collects two more coins for this turn.

Adam has (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (T). He's one coin away from triggering the end of the story!

You have (H) (H) (H) (H) (H).

Beth has (H) (H) (H) (H) (T) (T).

Adam, you, and Beth return your dice to the general pool. The game continues with your turn.

Your Turn

You are the Storyteller. Beth sits to your left. Adam sits to your right. You roll three dice and get:



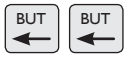
Eh. You keep the BLANK, pass the AND to Adam and pass the BUT to Beth. You roll three more dice and get:



Okay, you're still safe! You keep the BLANK die and pass the BUTs to Beth. You're feeling a little more cautious now, but you decide to roll three dice again.



Looks like the caution is warranted. You keep the BLANK die and pass the ANDs to Adam. Feeling a little less lucky, you decide only to roll two more dice this time. You get:



You pass those two dice to Beth, which gives her five dice. That means you must stop rolling now.

Now you, Adam, and Beth write the next sentence of the story. You go first, since you are the Storyteller. You can write three words because you have three dice. You could also use the free word "Robot," but decide not to do so. You're more interested in what Professor is doing at the moment:

Professor kicks it

"It" is probably the Switcheroo Machine, which was last seen sputtering in the previous sentence. Looks like Professor is going to start some aggressive repairs on his device. Adam continues the sentence with three words, because he has three dice.

Professor kicks it back to life

Finally, Beth has four dice, so she can add four more words She could also add the word "but" as a free word, but decides not to do so. She thinks Robot should be in this sentence, even if peripherally.

Robot waits anxiously while Professor kicks it back to life.

Like a fitful dad waiting for a baby to be born, Beth imagines Robot pacing back and forth while the Prof kicks his machine into some kind of working order. And that completes the sentence.

You were the Storyteller this turn, and you added three new words, so you get three more coins for your collection.

Adam has (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (T).

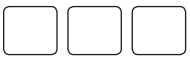
You have (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H).

Beth has (H) (H) (H) (H) (T) (T).

Adam, you and Beth return your dice to the general pool. The game continues with Beth's turn.

Beth's Turn

Beth is the Storyteller. You sit to her right. Adam sits to her left. Beth rolls three dice and gets:



Great start! She keeps those three dice for herself and rolls three more.



Okay, not bad. Not great, though. She keeps the one and passes the to you. She rolls three more dice:



Sheesh! Looks like her luck is running out. She passes those dice to Adam. She rolls three more dice:



Oh well. She passes those dice to you, giving you a total of five dice, so she cannot roll any more.

Now she, Adam, and you write the next sentence of the story. Beth is the Storyteller, so she goes first. She has four BLANKs, so she can write four words. Her two TAILS coins, give her two extra free words. She also has "Robot" as a free word. With the game so close to being finished, she decides to bring the story to a climax. She begins the sentence:

Bobby becomes Robot, Robot becomes Bobby,

You add your words next. You got five dice from Beth's rolls, so you can say five words. This is in addition to the word "and," which you can say as a free word. You add:

Bobby becomes Robot, Robot becomes Bobby, and Professor says with joy:

Adam adds his words to the sentence. Adam has three dice, so he can add three words. Plus, he can say "but" as a free word. He declines that liberty, though. He'll take this chance to tack on a quick joke.

Bobby becomes Robot, Robot becomes Bobby, and Professor says with joy: "Hello, Nobel Prize!"

The sentence is complete! Beth added six words to the story, but one of those words was "Robot," which is free. The second "Robot" was allowed because she had a TAILS coin, which gives her a free word also. That leaves the four words she got from her actual roll, giving her four new coins.

Adam has (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (T).

You have (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H).

Beth has (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (H) (T) (T).

Beth now has ten coins, so the current round is the last round of normal play. Fortunately, this is already the end of the round anyway. Under other circumstances, the round would continue with other player's turns.

Adam, you, and Beth return the dice to the general pool.

Now, because a player has 10 coins and the current round is now complete, the game will finish with one last special round.

The Epilogue

Beth's Turn

Beth had the most coins upon beginning this last round, so she will take the first turn. She has a total of 10 coins. That means she can write her last sentence with 10 words. (It doesn't matter whether the coins are TAILS or HEADS, they all count for a free word in this last round of play.) "Robot" is still a free word, for all players. She writes:

Bobby likes flying around town with Robot's very shiny rocket legs.

Adam's Turn

Adam had the second most coins, so he will take the second turn. He has a total of 9 coins, so he can write a 9-word sentence. Again, "Robot" is a free word. Beth already described how Bobby's handling the new life as a robot, so Adam describes how Robot likes being a real boy.

Robot likes eating pizza and playing with Bobby's little brother.

Your Turn

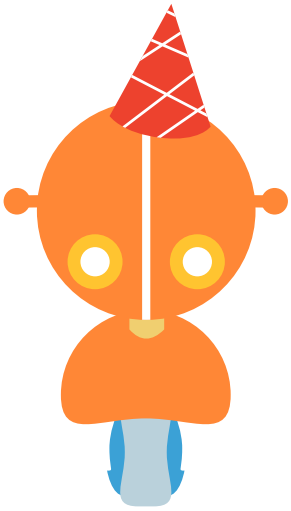
And finally, you had the least coins, but you get to have the literal last word in the story. Because you had the least coins, you will write the last sentence. You have 8 coins, so your sentence will be 8 words long. "Robot" is a free word, of course. You write these last words to finish up the story.

Bobby misses pizza; Robot misses flying; They switch back.

And that's the end of the story! You and your friends can tell a new story each time you play *Happy Birthday, Robot!*

Chapter 5: Optional Rules

When you've played *Happy Birthday, Robot!* a few times, you might want to try adding a twist to the game here or there. These options tell you how to play the game with two players, how to play solo, and how to begin the story in new ways. What kind of new variants can you come up with? Post them online and tell your friends!



Playing with Two Players

If you have only two players, you can still play *Happy Birthday, Robot!* Use the normal rules, with some exceptions:

There is only one Storyteller and one Neighbor.

The Neighbor may use either "but" or "and" as a free word, but not both.

The Neighbor adds words for both the and dice.

Playing with One Player

Happy Birthday, Robot! can be a solo writing exercise. Use the normal rules, with some exceptions.

You are both the Storyteller and the Neighbor.

Roll up to three dice at a time until you get more than four or more than four .

Write a sentence as if you are the Storyteller.

Then add to or continue that sentence as if you were a Neighbor.

Collect coins for each word you say as the Storyteller.

The story ends when you possess ten or more coins.

Increase this limit if you wish to tell longer stories.

New Beginnings

Once you get a handle on how to play, you and your friends can spice things up by using a different sentence as a new way to begin your story. You can use the same rules of this game to make stories about new characters.

For example, you could begin a story with the sentence "Call me Ishmael." And then create a house rule that "Ishmael" is the free word for the Storyteller instead of "Robot."