Once Upon a Time



The Storytelling Card Game



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Once Upon A Time is the storytelling card game that encourages creativity and collaborative play. Players create a story together using cards showing typical elements from fairytales — like Prince, Forest, or Fairy.

The first Storyteller starts to tell a story using the elements on her cards — her Prince might be hunting in the Forest, where he meets a mischievous Fairy. Whenever she mentions an element on one of her Story Cards, the Storyteller places that card face up on the table. She tries to guide the plot toward the conclusion on her Ending Card, which is different than those of the other players. But if she mentions something in her story that's on one of the other players' Story Cards, or if another player has the right Interrupt Story Card when the Storyteller plays a Story Card, then that player can take over as the new Storyteller.

The winner is the first player to bring the story to a close by using her unique Ending Card, after she's played all the Story Cards in her hand. The object of the game, though, isn't just to win, but to have fun telling a story together!

The Cards

There are three types of cards: Story Cards, Interrupt Story Cards (a special kind of Story Card), and Ending Cards.



Story Card | Interrupt Story Card | Ending Card

Story Cards

Each Story Card illustrates one of the elements that might appear in your story. They're divided into five categories. Each card is clearly marked with its category name, and with a colored icon for that category.



Character | Thing | Place | Aspect | Event

Rules Summary

Deal each player an Ending Card, and Story Cards equaling eleven minus the number of players (five minimum).

Draw a Story Card. The player who looks most like it is the first Storyteller.

When You ARE the Storyteller

Start to tell a story, or continue the story where the last Storyteller left off.

When you mention an element on one of your Story Cards, place that card on the table.

If you've played all your Story Cards, read out your Ending Card to win the game.

If you're interrupted, your turn as Storyteller ends. **Draw a Story Card.**

When You're NOT the Storyteller

Listen to the story, looking for chances to challenge and interrupt:

If the Storyteller mentions an element on one of your Story Cards, you can play it to become the new Storyteller.

If the Storyteller plays a Story Card that matches the category of an Interrupt Story Card in your hand (the colored icons are the same), you can play it to become the new Storyteller.

Drawing & Discarding

Every time the Storyteller loses the story, she draws a Story Card. If she passed the story, she may then discard a Story Card.

If a player interrupts unsuccessfully, she discards that card and draws two Story Cards.

If the Storyteller's ending fails then she discards it, draws a new one, and draws a Story Card.

Examples of Important Elements

STORYTELLER: "Once upon a time, there was a evil king who lived in an indestructible palace at the top of a distant mountain."

At this point, the Storyteller could use the Palace card (or King, or Mountain) because that's an important part of the story she's telling.

STORYTELLER: "One day a hero went in search of the mountain. On his way, he saw lots of villages where there were horses, stepmothers, and frogs, and also many strange things like giants, wolves, and talking giraffes. Finally, he arrived at the mountain."

The Storyteller couldn't play Horse, Stepmother, Frog, Giant, Wolf, or This Can Talk. Although these things were mentioned, they're of no importance to the story.

Examples of Playing Interrupt Story Cards

STORYTELLER: "After digging for hours, he finally uncovered the hidden treasure."

The Storyteller plays Treasure, which is an Interrupt Story Card, but she uses it as a normal Story Card. It has the green Thing category icon.

PLAYER: "Interrupt!"

The player correctly plays an Interrupt Story Card with the green Thing icon, and so interrupts. The Storyteller who was interrupted draws a Story Card, and the interrupting player continues as the new Storyteller.

The player couldn't have played an Interrupt Story Card with the blue Aspect icon, though. Yes, a Story Card called Hidden exists, and it's an Aspect, but the Storyteller didn't actually play that card.

CHARACTERS (YELLOW): The people and creatures that the story is about (like Queen or Wolf).

THINGS (GREEN): The important objects that feature in the story (like Sword or Spell).

PLACES (ORANGE): Locations the characters will visit (like Palace or Forest).

ASPECTS (BLUE): Descriptions of the characters, places, and things in the story (like Happy or Disguised).

EVENTS (PURPLE): Some of the things that can happen in the story (like Arguing or Meeting).

Interrupt Story Cards

Interrupt Story Cards are a special type of Story Card. You can use them as normal Story Cards; they each have a story element, and each one belongs to one of the five categories (shown by its icon and color). But alternatively, you can use them to interrupt the Storyteller after she plays a Story Card of the same category. This is explained in detail later on.

Ending Cards

Each Ending Card shows a possible conclusion for a fairytale. Players only get one of these cards each, and must try to guide the story so their own ending will finish it in a logical way, after they've played all their Story Cards.

Playing the Game

Sort the cards into two shuffled decks: an Ending Deck for Ending Cards, and a Story Deck for both Story Cards and Interrupt Story Cards. (A discard pile will also form during play.) Deal each player one Ending Card, plus Story Cards equal to eleven minus the number of players (five Story Cards minimum).

Draw a card from the Story Deck, then discard it. The player who looks most like it is the first Storyteller, and begins to tell a story. She may tell the story in any way she likes, and isn't limited by the cards in her hand. Whenever she mentions something on one of her Story Cards, though, she may play that card, placing it face up on the table (not in the discard pile). A line of played Story Cards will form, telling the growing story, as each new card is placed after the previous one.

Each element must be mentioned in a separate sentence, and be of some importance to the story for its Story Card to be played. You can't play a card when its element has only been mentioned in passing, and it has to make sense in the story.

The Storyteller can keep speaking until someone interrupts her. It's possible (although extremely difficult) for one Storyteller to play all her cards, finish the story, and win the game before anyone manages to interrupt her.

Passing the Story

If the Storyteller wishes, she can end her turn at any time by saying "Pass." She must **draw one card from the Story Deck, then may discard one Story Card** from her hand if she likes. The player on her left becomes the new Storyteller.

Interrupting the Storyteller

There are two ways for the other players to interrupt the Storyteller by playing a card to take over the story:

INTERRUPT WITH A STORY CARD:
If the Storyteller mentions something in her story that matches a Story Card in another player's hand, that player can play it to interrupt.

The Storyteller doesn't have to use the exact words written on the other player's Story Card (or Interrupt Story Card, if used as a Story Card) to be interrupted with it; as long as they're just different ways to say the same thing, it's fine. But a player can't interrupt by anticipating something the Storyteller hasn't said yet, even if it makes sense in the story.

INTERRUPT WITH AN INTERRUPT STORY CARD:
When the Storyteller plays a Story Card, any player who has an Interrupt Story Card with the same category icon/color can play it to interrupt.

The card's story element isn't used when you play an Interrupt Story Card this way. Interrupt Story Cards can only interrupt the Storyteller after she has actually played a Story Card (or an Interrupt Story Card used as a normal Story Card). They don't let a player interrupt when the Storyteller only mentions something in her story without actually playing its Story Card, though. And a player can't play an Interrupt Story Card on another card that was used to interrupt.

When the Storyteller has been interrupted, her turn ends and she must **draw one card from the Story Deck**. She leaves her last-played card on the table, and the player who interrupted her places the interrupting card face up on the table next to it, then continues the story from where she left off. Everything the new Storyteller says must follow sensibly and consistently from the story the last Storyteller was telling.

Challenging the Storyteller

There are a few occasions when other players can challenge the Storyteller, and so force her turn to end:

GETTING STUCK: The Storyteller stops talking, can't think of anything to say, or otherwise falters in her story. A pause of five to ten seconds is a fair indication that she's stuck.

CONTRADICTING THE STORY: She says something that blatantly disagrees with what went before in the story. "Wait a minute, the king is dead! He was eaten by the dragon!"

RAMBLING: She's been talking for a long time, but hasn't moved the story forward. "So he wandered around the forest for a long, long time, in a wandering-around-the-forest kind of way. 'I'm wandering around the forest,' he said."

SILLINESS: She stops making sense, or tries to make something happen that's foolish or too ridiculous even for a fairytale. "So the prince knelt before the sausage the cook had made and said, 'Sausage, will you marry me?' "

UNIMPORTANT ELEMENT: She's just listing elements so she can play cards, without bothering to tie them into the story.

Examples of Playing Story Cards

STORYTELLER: "And so she fell asleep under the great oak tree that grew in the forest."

At this point, another player with the Forest card could play it, interrupt the Storyteller, and continue the story herself.

The interrupting Story Card doesn't need words identical to what the Storyteller says, though.

STORYTELLER: "The king fell in love with the woodcutter's daughter ..."

The Storyteller plays the Falling in Love card.

STORYTELLER: "... and they were married. A year and a day later she gave birth to a baby boy."

Now another player holding the Prince or Child card could play it and interrupt. A baby is a child, and the son of a king is a prince, even though the Storyteller hasn't used those exact words.

However, a player can't interrupt with a Story Card element that hasn't yet been mentioned at all by the Storyteller, even if she might say it soon.

STORYTELLER: "As he tiptoed through the cave, he heard a loud, deep snoring sound."

Another player couldn't interrupt with the Monster card at this point, because the snoring could be coming from a bear, or a wizard, or even an underground river that sounds like someone snoring.

Example of Winning

STORYTELLER: "When they cut down the magic tree, inside was a ring etched with the queen's name."

The Storyteller plays Ring as the last Story Card in her hand, then her Ending Card to win.

STORYTELLER: "So They Returned It To Its Original Owner. The End!"

Credits

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Once Upon a Time in the Classroom

Once Upon a Time is a game for all ages — especially younger children exercising essential skills in reading, decision making, cooperative play, and creativity. In ESL and foreign language classes it also strengthens a variety of fundamental skills. And, best of all, it teaches those skills in a way that kids find fun and familiar.

Visit our website for info on foreign-language editions and using *Once Upon a Time* in the classroom, plus downloads, variants, and more!

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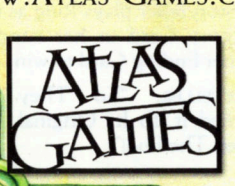


Most groups shout "Too long!" or "No! Silly!" at the top of their voices when a Storyteller needs to be challenged. But if it's not immediately obvious she's lost her turn, the group can decide by a vote (show of hands, thumbs up/down, etc.).

When the Storyteller loses her turn through a challenge, she must **draw one card from the Story Deck**, and the player on her left becomes the new Storyteller. Also, if it's decided that her last-played card didn't actually happen in the story, she takes it back into her hand.

These rules are intended to encourage people to tell enjoyable and believable stories, and to ensure that the game is as fast-moving as possible. In practice, a gentle reminder is usually enough to prompt the Storyteller to correct herself, and losing her turn isn't necessary.

Challenges shouldn't be used as a tactic to take the story away from a player who's winning. And they definitely shouldn't be used to harass younger or less-articulate players.

Unsuccessful Challenges & Interruptions

There's no penalty for a failed challenge. However, if someone tries to interrupt and is judged to be incorrect, the failed interrupter **discards the card she tried to interrupt with, and draws two cards from the Story Deck.**

If two people interrupt at the same time, then the first one to lay her card on the table becomes the new Storyteller. In this case, there's no penalty for the person who made the unsuccessful interruption.

It's too late to interrupt or challenge a card if the storyteller has already played another card.

If it's not immediately clear whether or not an interruption or challenge is fair, you should decide by a vote from the players not involved in it.

Ending the Story

When the Storyteller has played all her Story Cards (and Interrupt Story Cards), she then plays her Ending Card to finish the story. If this brings the tale to a sensible and satisfying conclusion, then the game and the story are over, and she wins!

Should the other players judge that the Storyteller's Ending Card doesn't finish the story satisfactorily or doesn't make sense, then she must **discard her Ending Card and draw a new one, plus draw one card from the Story Deck.** Play then passes to the person on her left. We recommend that you don't enforce this rule too strictly, though, particularly with inexperienced or younger players. Only if an ending is obviously complete nonsense should it be disallowed.

You can't interrupt an Ending Card with a Story Card or Interrupt Story Card.

Starting the Next Story

The player with the most cards left in her hand at the end becomes the first Storyteller for the next game. She begins by collecting the cards, shuffling, and dealing new hands.



INTERRUPT

Dying

Event



Or after an Event is played,
Interrupt

Journey

Event



Storm

Event



Transforming

Event



This Comes Alive

Event



Lost

Event



INTERRUPT

Returned

Event



Or after an Event is played,
Interrupt

Found

Event



Time Passes

Event



Contest

Event



Escaping

Event



Fighting

Event



Chasing

Event



Imprisoned

Event



INTERRUPT

Rescued

Event



Or after an Event is played,

Interrupt

Someone is hurt

Event



This Breaks

Event



Arguing

Event



Sleeping

Event



Falling in Love

Event



Interrupt

Parting Ways

Event



Or after an Event is played,
Interrupt

Meeting

Event



Making Mischief

Event



Interrupt

This is Revealed

Event



Or after an Event is played,
Interrupt

Planning

Event



Cauldron

Thing



Book

Thing



Axe

Axe

Thing



Clothes

Clothes

Thing



Door

Door

Thing



Stairs

Stairs

Thing



Wall

Wall

Thing



Gift

Interrupt

Gift

Thing



Or after a Thing is played,

Interrupt

Tree

Tree

Thing



Window

Window

Thing



Food

Food

Thing



Ring

Ring

Thing



Sword

Sword

Thing



Interrupt

Crown

Crown

Thing



Or after a Thing is played,
Interrupt

A Trap

A Trap

Thing



Interrupt

Key

Key

Thing



Or after a Thing is played,
Interrupt

Spell

Spell

Thing



Interrupt

Treasure

Treasure

Thing



Or after a Thing is played,
Interrupt

A Well

A Well

Thing



Fire

Fire

Thing



Foolish

Aspect



Frightened

Aspect



happy

Aspect



Lucky

Aspect



Sad

Aspect



INTERRUPT

Blind

Aspect

Or after an Aspect is played,

Interrupt

Ugly

Aspect



Very Strong

Aspect



Beautiful

Aspect



This Can Fly

Aspect



This Can Talk

Aspect



Tiny

Aspect



Wicked

Aspect



Far Away

Aspect

Or after an Aspect is played,
Interrupt

Disguised

Aspect



Brave

Aspect



Crazy

Aspect

Or after an Aspect is played,
Interrupt

Long-Lost

Aspect

Or after an Aspect is played,
Interrupt

Hidden

Aspect



Hidden

Healed

Aspect



Healed

Stolen

Aspect



Stolen

Wise

Aspect



Wise

Interrupt

Secret

Aspect



Or after an Aspect is played,
Interrupt

Secret

Poisoned

Aspect



Poisoned

Cursed

Aspect



Cursed

Interrupt

Kingdom

Place



Or after a Place is played,
Interrupt

Kingdom

Interrupt

Ruin

Place



Or after a Place is played,
Interrupt

Ruin

Cottage

Place



Forest

Place



Kitchen

Place



River

Place



Village

Place



INTERRUPT

home

Place



Or after a Place is played,
Interrupt

City

Place



Garden

Place



Dungeon

Place



Palace

Place



Road

Place



Tower

Place



Interrupt

Church

Place



Or after a Place is played,
Interrupt

Cave

Place



In the Sky

Place



Mountain

Place



Night

Place



Swamp

Place



Prince

Character



Princess

Character



Queen

Character



Guard

Character



Cook

Character



Fairy

Character



INTERRUPT

Enemy

Character



Or after a Character is played,

Interrupt

INTERRUPT

Thief

Character



Or after a Character is played,

Interrupt

Giant

Character



Beggar

Character



Brother or Sister

Character



Interrupt

Old Person

Character



Or after a Character is played,

Interrupt

Child

Character



Stepmother

Character



Interrupt

Orphan

Character



Or after a Character is played,

Interrupt

Parent

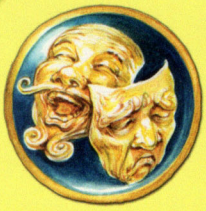
Character



Interrupt

Husband or Wife

Character



Or after a Character is played,

Interrupt

King

Character



Monster

Character



Dragon

Character



Witch

Character



Wolf

Character



Frog

Character



horse

Character





And she kept her father's advice in mind from that day onward.

And the parents were reunited with their long-lost child.

And his mother was delighted with such an unusual gift.

And so the old woman's prophecy had been fulfilled.

And they remained blind for the rest of their days for their wickedness and falsehood.

He saw the error of his ways and lived a good life from that day forward.

And when they died they passed it on to their children.

He lived the rest of his life as a beggar ... which was perfectly just.

His wound was healed but his heart remained broken forever.


It just shows that stepmothers aren't always what they seem.


So he forgave her and they were married.


So he realized how loyal his sister had been.


So the village was restored to prosperity.


So they changed places and everything was back to normal.


Which proves you should always be careful when choosing your companions.


So they promised never to fight again.


Which proves that a heart that is brave and true will always triumph in the end.


And for all I know they may be dancing in the palace still.

And the kingdom rejoiced at the end of the tyrant's reign.

Despite his terrible crime, the king agreed to spare his life.

She never let her treasure out of her sight again.

Her courage had made her rich.

She escaped that awful place and fled home.

So he told her he was the prince and they lived happily ever after.

So the king relented and the two were married.

So the cook prepared it for the feast and it was delicious.

So she revealed her true identity and they were married.

So the queen gave them the prize as she had promised.

So the rightful ruler was placed on the throne once more.

The king fulfilled his side of the bargain and everyone was happy.

So they escaped their captors and fled home.

So they returned what was stolen to its original owner.

The prince's madness was cured.

Which meant they would become king and queen in the course of time.

The curse was lifted as had been foretold.

So the spell was broken and they were free.

They were buried in the same grave, and the kingdom mourned them.

The monster was destroyed and the city was safe once more.

The flames rose higher and the wicked place was destroyed.

Beaten, the foul creature was driven out of the kingdom.

True love had broken the enchantment.

Which is how the kingdom got such an unusual name.

And so the witch perished in her own cauldron.

And as long as she lived it could never be removed.

With the enemy dead they could get married at last.

But no matter how hard they searched they were never able to find it again.

Every day he saw the result of his disobedience, and wept.

He was freed from his enchantment and the next day they were married.

So it was transformed back into human form.

So she knew that her visitor had been a monster all along.

So the evil-doers were thrown down a well.

Tell your own fantastic tales of brave heroes and daring adventure!



Once Upon a Time is the award-winning storytelling card game that encourages creativity and collaborative play. One player is the Storyteller, and begins telling a story using the fairytale elements on her Story Cards, guiding the plot toward her Ending Card. The other players use their own cards to interrupt her and become the new Storyteller. The winner is the first player to use all her Story Cards and play her Ending Card. The object of the game, though, isn't just to win, but to have fun telling a story together!



Contains 110 Story Cards, 55 Ending Cards, & Rules

Created by Richard Lambert, Andrew Rilstone, & James Wallis

3rd Edition Artwork by Omar Rayyan

20-40 Min.

2-6 Players

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