

Pareidolia

4 to 10 players; 20-30 minutes; ages 8+

Overview

You and a friend are artists working together on an image. Your shared canvas is the sky, and your medium is the clouds. But the wind makes no plans; the artists cannot communicate, and the first cloud is tossed to randomize its placement.

Take turns being the artist or a cloud watcher, scoring points for getting players to guess your word or guessing somebody else's word before time runs out. Can you find the most shapes in the clouds?

Components

- 14 clouds in 5 shapes
- 72 word cards
- 1 card dispenser
- 1 first player marker
- 1 bird token
- 45 “droplet” point tokens
- 2 two-minute timers

Game Setup

1. Whoever last saw a shape in the clouds will be **Main Artist** first. The player opposite them is the **Second Artist**. The area between them is the “sky,” where they will be placing clouds.
2. Give the main artist the first player token. They will keep this token throughout the game.
3. Shuffle the cards, place them in the dispenser, and give it to the main artist. Give the bird token to the second artist.
4. Place the cloud shapes within reach of both artists. It may be useful to sort by shape.
5. Place the “droplet” point tokens to the side.
6. Give a 2-minute timer to the player sitting to the right of the main artist. They are the timekeeper for the first turn.

Round Setup

The main artist draws 3 cards. They choose one and place the others at the bottom of the deck.

After memorizing the word, the main artist passes the card to the second artist. Once they memorize the word as well, the category is announced.

Playing a Round

To begin the turn, the timekeeper should get ready; they will flip the timer momentarily.

The main artist chooses any cloud shape from the supply and tosses it gently into the center of play. Giving it a spin or a flip in the air is encouraged. This way, the sky is started randomly, ensuring that there is no clear “up” to the image.

Once the first cloud lands on the table, the timekeeper flips the 2-minute timer.

While time is running, the artists will take turns taking an action, beginning with the second artist (since the main artist has already placed the first cloud). All non-artist players may guess the word at any time. They may guess as many times as they like while the artists are placing clouds.

If any player guesses correctly before time runs out, the artists must say so. Both artists and the player who guessed correctly gain a droplet token. If nobody guesses the word before time runs out, nobody gains any droplet tokens.

The main artist passes the dispenser to the left, and the second artist passes the bird left. Begin a new round with these new players as the main and second artists, respectively.

Artist Actions

As an artist, when it is your turn to do something, you may take any one of the following actions:

- **Place a cloud** – Take any cloud shape from the supply and add it to the sky.
- **Pick up a cloud** – Pick up any cloud in the sky and place it back in the sky however you like.
- **Remove a cloud** – Remove any cloud from the sky and place it in the supply.
- **Nudge clouds** – Nudge one or more clouds in the sky. To do this, place your finger on the table and drag it in a straight line. As soon as you remove your finger from the table, this action is finished.

Additional Rules About Cloud Placement

You can never intentionally change or undo the move that the other artist just made.

If you accidentally move other clouds during your turn, leave them in their new position.

Clouds can overlap, and you may even pick up or remove a cloud that is overlapped.

Communication

Artists may not speak, signal, or otherwise communicate with any other player for any reason, especially not the other artist. There are only 2 exceptions:

- Announcing the category of the chosen card before placing the first cloud.
- Announcing if another player has guessed correctly.

Game End

For games of 4-5 players, the game ends after everybody has been the main artist 3 times.

For games of 6-7 players, the game ends after everybody has been the main artist 2 times.

For games of 8-10 players, the game ends after everybody has been the main artist once.

When the game ends, whoever has the most droplet tokens wins the game. If there is a tie, the tied player who is most visibly relaxed wins, as voted on by the other players. Competitive relaxation is encouraged. Or, if everybody is so relaxed that nobody can decide, then they share the victory.