

Purely speaking games

Psychiatrist:

One person is the psychiatrist. They need to 'leave the room', which could involve them muting their audio, leaving the call or quite literally leaving the room – it doesn't matter as long as they can't hear the rest of the group. You will need to call them back in though! The other players need to decide a rule which will determine how they answer questions. For example, the rule can be "answer yes if you're a boy, answer no if you're a girl". When the psychiatrist comes in, they ask questions to anybody to try and work out what the rule is. It's a big favourite and works well as people can drop out if needs be (as long as they aren't the Psychiatrist!).

Purple Kingdom:

It's the same as Psychiatrist but in reverse – one person comes up with a rule about what can enter the 'Purple Kingdom'. For example, the rule could be that the object has to start with the same letter as the person's first name. The person who came up with the rule (say if they were called Bob) could then say "I can get into the Purple Kingdom with bananas". Taking it in turns, the others (who don't know the rule) ask if they can get into the purple kingdom with something. For example: "Can I get into the Purple Kingdom with sheep?" would be answered by either yes or no, depending on who is asking. Keep asking questions until someone thinks they've figured out the rule, which they can guess on their turn. The rule can be anything, but obviously make it guessable!

Walrus:

One person needs to 'leave the room'. The other players think of an action of some kind they're going to replace with the word 'Walrus'. The player who went out will then ask questions to determine what 'Walrus' means. For example, if Walrus meant 'walking' that round, you could answer "How often do you Walrus" with "I Walrus every day". You'd probably want to be a bit more creative than that and make it a bit harder to guess!

Bring Me:

This is a bit more of an active game that might be a bit more dependent on where people are. The aim of the game is simple, the leader says an object and everyone has to try and find it and bring it back. You'd probably give people a thirty second timer to find the object, as you don't want anyone looking for too long. You might want to motivate them with giving them the opportunity to choose the next object for example, as long as they aren't too silly.

Empires:

Each person needs to think of a famous person to be their new name. They don't tell anyone what it is; they send it to their leader using the chat function (privately). Once everyone has a new identity (you can add some names you made up yourself to make it harder), the leader reads out the names in a random order. Someone starts by asking someone if they are one of the names they just heard and if they are wrong, the person who was asked asks someone else. If they get it right, they move into their 'empire' and they get another go. The person who is the last to be guessed, who will have everyone in their empire, wins.

Pictionary:

Using the whiteboard on Zoom, you can get one person to draw something that everyone else has to then guess. You can do it in teams or by the rules of whomever guesses it right draws next. There are random word generators on the internet you can use if needed, or you could plan some words to fit around a theme or plan.

Hum the tune:

Very straightforward – one person hums a song and everyone else has to guess what it is. If they guess correctly, they get to hum next.

Contact:

One lead person thinks of a word without telling anyone – for example, 'tower'. They would then say what the first letter of the word is, which is T. The other players have to try and think of a way to describe a word, any word, beginning with T so that only them and someone else can get without the lead person guessing. For example, one person might say "pigs find them". If someone else says "Contact", they count down "5,4,3,2,1" and then say the word they're thinking of (truffles) at the same time. If they both say the correct word at the same time without the lead person saying the correct word, they earn another letter of the word – then the letter would be O. If the contact people don't get the same word or the lead person gets the word right too, it stays on the same letter (T). Every time a new letter is added, someone can try and guess the word. If they get it right, they get to be the lead person and make the new word. It's a little tricky to understand fully at first but once it gets going it's a really fun game that you can participate as much or as less as you want.

Sorry I'm late...:

One person says "Sorry I'm late" then describes (loosely) something a character did in a film. For example, "Sorry I'm late, I've been trapped in the jungle for 26 years". If someone guesses the film correctly (Jumanji), they say their sentence next. Eventually someone might run out of films and then whoever has one can say theirs. You can also play by just describing a film and guessing the film, although you need to be loose in your description to make it hard.

Two truths and a lie:

Everyone thinks of two truths and a lie about themselves. Taking it in turns, probably starting with whoever has actually finished writing theirs, they tell their two truths and a lie. The other players have to try and guess which is the lie, which is then revealed.

Technology-reliant games

Spaceteam:

Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/spaceteam/id570510529> (free)

Android: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.sleepingbeastgames.spaceteam&hl=en_GB (free)

It's probably the most popular and totally 100% free multiplayer phone game ever. I've never actually played with more than 2 people, but basically the game is shouting instructions that your phone gives you to whomever needs to follow that instruction. If you do enough of them wrong/too late, you explode and lose. A great way to have loads of people shouting at each other in seconds!

(You have to select 'internet' at the top and use a password – it worked fine in a test but it is designed to be played locally so results may vary).

Skribbl.io:

It's basically Pictionary that you can play competitively without needing to score or provide words. It's totally free, just type skribbl.io into the search bar. One person creates a private room and everyone else can join using the invite link below 'start game'. Once everyone is ready, start the game – and that's it! It is a little difficult to do on mobile because it's not designed for mobile phones, but it is somewhat playable even if it's a bit hard to draw. A computer, laptop or tablet would be a lot easier to use. It might be easier to use the whiteboard on Zoom if many people are using phones.

Jackbox games (require buying and some setup):

Drawful 2 - Steam: <https://store.steampowered.com/app/442070/> (£6.99, only host needs to buy it)

This costs money and requires Steam on a PC or laptop. Again, it's basically like Pictionary with a few things added on to make it more entertaining. For this to work, you have to share your PC or laptop screen on Zoom so people can see and hear what's going on. They then connect to the room using the room code at jackbox.tv – all instructions are on the screen. They then use their phones/laptops/tablets/computers to draw and vote on the best drawings. It's the best version of Pictionary type games I've discussed and completely designed to be played on phones too but it does require you buying the game and using a PC or laptop to share it.

Fibbage XL – Steam: https://store.steampowered.com/app/448080/Fibbage_XL/ (£6.99, only host needs to buy it)

The setup works the same as Drawful. This game is basically Balderdash, where you have to try and come up with a reasonable answer to a prompt that people will think is the real answer. All the instructions on how to play are again on the screen. There's a family-friendly filter that I'd recommend using. You can't control what people say which comes up on screen but you can always stop sharing your screen to 'censor' it.

There are also Jackbox party packs which are roughly the same thing, but other games. One whole pack of six games costs about £15-20 so they're a bit more expensive. Some wouldn't work over a video call but the games that are the best and are suitable are Quiplash 2 (found in pack 3), Mad Verse City (pack 5) and Trivia Murder Party (pack 6). All these games and the above are super easy to set up, it's just a question of if you're able to get it on Steam (the app store of computers) on a PC and share your screen and audio. Maybe stick to spoken games if you're not familiar with all this!