



You've Got Game III

The Best Word Games for Holiday 2005

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The happiest days of my year are not birthdays, holidays, weddings and anniversaries but the days my husband and I spend at Toy Fair seeking out new word games.

The second happiest day is when I tell you that we found exciting, challenging games that are perfect to give and get (drop those hints) during the holidays in December, and all year long on some of those above mentioned occasions (well, maybe not wedding presents).

Along with new games (indicated by asterisks), I'm listing new versions of old favorites and have included a few "not strictly word games" that are word-buff worthy for the way they tweak our brains. And, surprise, there are two books that may not look like games but you will want to "play" every page.

The age categories are listed on the boxes by the companies so the variety is not my doing, but theirs. But don't take these designations too literally as some "8 to adult" games can be as challenging to adults as "12 to adult."

Suggested Retail Prices are a guide, not a certainty. Even the SRP varies and discount prices abound in stores, at amazon.com, boardgames.com and other sources you will find if you google the game's name. The following order in no way means one game is more fun than another but might help you make your selections. If price rules, I'm starting high and working down.

I have a group of friends I call The Games Gang and we've played every one of these games and pored over the "playable" books. If we didn't love them, they wouldn't be here.

MONOPOLY 8 to adult, 2-8 players \$39.99

If I have to explain Monopoly to you I'd like to know what planet you're from and when you arrived. On the other hand, if you haven't played this classic board game since you were a kid, now is definitely the time to get back in the game. The 70th anniversary edition, billed as "The Best Monopoly Game Money Can Buy", is all glitter and glow with 1930s-inspired graphics, larger houses, more luxurious hotels and chrome-plated tokens. Even the board is foil wrapped and the entire game is housed in a shiny tin box with a colorful sleeve that is the first sign this game is special. The rules booklet gives the history of Monopoly from inception, 1935, and is fun to read. You won't *Go To Jail* if you don't listen to me, but you will be missing a *Chance* to have a brand new time with a grand old classic.

***GO MENTAL** 12 years and over, 2-6 players \$29.99

We love games where nobody has to wait to take a turn. In GO MENTAL you can challenge an opponent to answer a difficult question or steal another's question when you know the answer. But beware; things are not always what they seem. Every card contains a list of four items with one being the "odd one out." For example, given Shake, Stir, Twist and Swim, Swim seems to be the odd one but it is Stir, as the other three are dances (every card includes a brief explanation). Expect the unexpected and your "brain" (or token) moves around the board where all players are striving to get to the MENTAL space. The game includes the colorful board, six brains, 1000 intriguing questions, Challenge and Steal cards, a timer and *exceptionally clear rules*, always a joy. There is nothing odd in this list: Play, Fun, Laugh, Learn. They *all* apply to GO MENTAL!