

# \_:a meeting:\_

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\_:a meeting:\_ is a card-toolbox for two (or more) people to playfully explore and reflect the relationship between themselves, and their connection to the environment around them. The cards enable the participants to spontaneously design an adventurous meeting that can last between 30 minutes up to several hours. This card set can be used and played by anybody who likes to walk on the edge of what is regarded as proper behaviour.

## \_:The Cards

The Standard Deck consists of 40 labelled cards and an additional 20 empty cards (5 per colour). The cards are divided into four different types:

- activity (yellow): define the main action of a part
- place (green): define the location of a part
- time (red): define the duration of a part
- bonus (blue): add a bonus effect to a part

All cards should be self-explanatory. If ever you find yourself wondering how a card is meant, how a card is correctly interpreted, the golden rule is: **Your interpretation is always the right one!** This game is not about playing it right, but about enabling you to experience someone else and your environment in a different way. Anything that accommodates such an experience is in the spirit of *\_:a meeting:\_*.

## \_:Before you Start

Before you start there are some questions I would like you to go through together.

- How much time do you want to reserve for your meeting? Do you want to play your meeting right away or schedule it for another day?

- Which playstyle do you want to follow during your meeting? See the [Playstyle](#) chapter for more info.
- How many parts do you want to include in your meeting?
- How comfortable are you when it comes to behaving outside of social norms?
- Do you have clear boundaries on what type of activities you do not want to do? Also communicate physical restrictions (f.ex. I recently hurt my left leg and don't feel comfortable walking long distances).

## Getting Started

Find a place where you can sit together undisturbed, maybe at a table at your home or in a café. You want enough space to place your cards, and you want them to be placed in such a way that all participants can access them.

Start by separating all cards according to their colours, and shuffle each pile. You should have four piles now: a yellow one with all activity-cards, a red one with all time-cards, a green one with all place-cards, and a blue one with all bonus-cards.

Imagine or make a grid in between you that looks like this:

	A	P	T	B
part 1	a1	p1	t1	(b1)
part 2	a2	p2	t2	(b2)
part 3	a3	p3	t3	(b3)

In the first column you are going to place all activity cards (yellow), in the second column all place cards (green), in the third all time cards (red), and finally in the fourth column all bonus cards (blue). Place your four piles next to each other as shown in the grid above, so that the activity cards are on the cell with a capital A, the place cards on the cell with a capital P and so on.

**A combination of at least one activity, one place, and one time card is called a part.** Bonus cards are not required for a part to be considered complete. Your entire meeting will consist of several parts. In the example above, the meeting will have three parts, but it can also have only

one part or ten. This is up to you. You can place tokens in the beginning of each row to mark the different parts, f.ex. a die showing the respective number.

## \_:Designing Your Meeting

It is time to design your meeting. Yay! As I wrote earlier, I recommend to do that somewhere quiet and non-windy, with enough space to lay out the grid and place all the cards.

From now on you will be taking turns. The person with the longer fingernails starts.

1. Draw a total of three cards. This can be any combination of the four piles.
2. Lay them out openly, so that everyone can see them.
3. Consider either for yourself or with the other participants how you feel about these cards. Everyone is allowed to talk about the cards they see and how they think the cards relate to what is already placed.
4. Place **one** of the three cards into an empty cell on the grid. An activity card goes into the yellow column, a place card into the green column and so forth.
5. If all cells of a column are full, and if you really would like to replace one existing card with a new one, you can ask for a vote. You may give an explanation why you would like to change the card before the vote. Otherwise there should not be a debate. If **all** participants agree to replace the card, you can go ahead. Otherwise -- if there is at least one vote against replacing the card -- you pass on the turn without placing a card.
6. Put the unused cards under their respective pile, and pass on the turn to the next participant.

## Replacing an Existing Card

Sometimes you might not like a card that has been placed or you have drawn one that you would prefer to see in your meeting. In that case you can call out for a vote on your turn.

1. Start your turn as before, drawing three cards in any combination from the four piles. Lay them out openly and have them for discussion.
2. If you see a card that you would place on the grid instead of one that is already lying there, ask for a vote.
3. You nominate the card that you want to replace and nominate the card that would go there instead. Give a short explanation why you think that would be a good idea.
4. Without going into a debate, everyone raises their hand if they agree. If **all** participants agree, replace the card. If at least one participant does not agree, pass on your turn without placing any card.

## Card Syntax

You can understand each part as a sentence: We **do something** **at some place** **for so much time** **in such a way**. As the colouring of this sentence indicates, each component of this sentence is represented in the different card types.

In most cases you will have to place one card per type in each part, the bonus card being optional. Some activity cards, however, have special requirements. Let's have a look at the card "Audiowalk":

We each take a recording device. We walk in different directions. We describe where we are going and what we see to the recording device. After **XX minutes** we meet at our starting point again. We exchange devices and go on the audio-walk the other just made for us. **Our starting point is...**

As you can see some text is highlighted in red and one in green. Red colouring means that it affects the time cards, and green colour means that it affects place cards. What you want to pay attention to is whether the highlighted part has the following signs in it:

- **XX**: No card of this type needs to be played here. Instead the person placing the card decides on what the XX stand for. In <Audiowalk> that would be the number of minutes. If someone wanted to place <Audiowalk> into a cell that already had a time-card, they would ask for a vote as in "Replacing an Existing Card".
- **...**: A card of that type is specifying the activity. In the example of <Audiowalk>, since you will walk around freely, the place-card is only indicating where to start for this activity, not where the whole activity is taking place. It is however not necessarily the person who plays <Audiowalk> who is defining the specificity here, but whoever places the place-card for this part.

Sometimes a card has even two or more "..." or "XX". All of them need to be defined. **If there are more than one "..." you will also have to play additional cards of that type!**

## Example

Thea and Ronne are designing *\_:a meeting:\_* together. They make four piles, shuffle all of them, and then place them according to the grid. They decide to create a meeting of two parts. Ronne has the longer fingernails and therefore starts.

Ronne decides to draw two activity-cards and one place-card:

- <Unraveling Ball>
- <A Letter to You>
- <where a cat would rest>

He lays them out openly so that Thea can look at the cards. Ronne says that he likes the playfulness of the <Unravelling Ball>. Thea, however, seems very excited about the place-card

since she really loves cats. Ronne feels inspired by this energy and decides to place <where a cat would rest> into the first part. He then puts the two activity-cards under the activity-pile (A).

Now it is Thea’s turn. She draws one activity-, one time-, and one bonus-card:

- <A Glass of Water>
- <until we find a meaningful ending>
- <in silence>

While laying them out openly, she already admits that she doesn’t like <A Glass of Water> so much. Taking a moment to see the cards properly, Ronne replies that this activity would go well with <where a cat would rest>. “Seems cosy”, he says. “True”, she replies, “but it also seems somewhat boring.” Ronne is not convinced: “When do you ever drink a glass of water consciously?” - “I do this all the time!”, Thea says stubbornly and decides to place the time-card in the second part.

This way they go on until the grid looks like this:

	A	P	T	B
<b>part 1</b>	Deck of Questions	where a cat would rest	until one of us says “Countdown”	like children
<b>part 2</b>	Instant Gallery	where everything is a bit louder	until we find a meaningful ending	

All the parts are playable now since the second part doesn’t necessarily need a bonus-card to be complete. It’s Thea’s turn and she is curious to explore some more options, that’s why she decides to take another turn. She draws two bonus-cards and one activity-card:

- <What did I learn about you?>
- <slowly>
- <Audiowalk>

Ronne immediately suggests that the reflection <What did I learn about you?> would be a good ending. Thea agrees but she is more excited about <Audiowalk> and actually feel more drawn to this than to the <Instant Gallery>. She therefore proposes a vote. She gives a small fiery speech about what she likes in <Audiowalk>, then they vote. Ronne is convinced and so they agree to replace <Instant Gallery> with <Audiowalk>, therefore also removing the time-card for this part. Instead they agree to define the XX in <Audiowalk> as 20 minutes.

They decide that the meeting they have now looks fun, and so they stop the design-part. Their final grid looks like this:

	A	P	T	B
<b>part 1</b>	Deck of Questions	where a cat would rest	until one of us says "Countdown"	like children
<b>part 2</b>	Audiowalk	where everything is a bit louder	(20 minutes)	

## \_:Preparing Your Meeting

You have chosen the outline of your meeting, now it is time to prepare everything before you go on this adventure together.

As you will see, some cards require certain material (i.e. chalk, recording devices, etc.). The cards that need material will inform you about what material is needed. Make sure to assemble all necessary material beforehand.

In case you think you will forget what you designed for each part, I suggest to make one envelope for every part. Simply put all the cards for one part in one envelope and write the number of the part on it. Additionally, you can also write down some specificities on the envelope. Thea and Ronne f.ex. have written "20 minutes" on their second envelope which includes <Audiowalk>.

Thea and Ronne pack pieces of paper, pens, their phones and two pair of headsets with them. The phones are used as a recording-device as well as a timer for <until one of us says "Countdown">. Then they are good to go.

## \_:Playing Your Meeting

The cards that you have laid out are a mere tool to design each part. By no means will the cards explain all details necessary in order to go through a part. Some combinations of cards might be quite tricky to execute, some might need further negotiations. Sometimes you might only realize during the meeting that you need to specify some details. Don't let the uncertainty of how to execute a part irritate you. **These situations are intended and part of the experience of \_:a meeting:\_.** Most cards are written in such a way that they leave room for your interpretation. Your interpretation and perspective on the cards will make each meeting a unique experience!

Additionally, you will be moving through a dynamic and changing environment, and sometimes your plans will be affected by what is happening around you. You are not only meeting each other, but also the city! In these cases I like to remind myself of a quote from Bruce Lee:

*“Be like water making its way through cracks. Do not be assertive, but adjust to the object, and you shall find a way around or through it. If nothing within you stays rigid, outward things will disclose themselves.*

*Empty your mind, be formless. Shapeless, like water. If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle and it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now, water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.”*

## Ending Your Meeting

Your meeting ends when you have finished playing the last part. In essence the cards should provide you with the tools to create a “meaningful” final part as your ending activity, and whilst designing your meeting you can keep this in mind. The cards are meant to invite you to take responsibility for your own experience.

If you struggle with finding a good ending or your design doesn't include a proper ending-part, I can offer you the following ending protocol:

1. Go find a quiet/comfortable space to sit down together. Maybe over a drink, maybe somewhere out in a park. Maybe both.
2. Slowly become silent, turning your attention inwards. You can also close your eyes.
3. Take a couple of deep breaths in your own tempo.
4. Start observing how you feel. What is present with you? What comes to your mind when you think of the meeting? What comes to mind if you think of the person(s) you had been with? And the places you have seen? Stay with these question for around 10 minutes.
5. Once you feel ready you can open your eyes again. Wait until everyone has opened their eyes.
6. Keep eye contact for a little while without saying anything.
7. Now answer the following questions together. There is no need to go through all of them, so don't rush. If you happen to talk a lot about just one question that is fine. Again, these question are a way to enable reflection, not a to-do-list. I suggest to take between 20-40 minutes for answering the question.
  - a. What were my favourite moments during this meeting?
  - b. What of our activities would I like to do again? What would I change?
  - c. What have I learned about myself/you?
  - d. What have I learned about the places we have seen?
  - e. How did my relationship to you/the places we have seen change?
8. Finally it is time to properly end. Again take a moment to silently look each other into the eyes.
9. Thank your companions for the time they have spent with you. And maybe you want to give each other a hug. Hugs are healthy!

## \_:Empty Cards

The empty cards included in the deck are yours to fill out. This way you can make the card-set somewhat your own, adding your own flavour to the set. Maybe you have amazing ideas for activities that you would like to include. Maybe there are amazing places in your city that invite unconventional activities. Maybe you have weird tools to define the duration of a part.

If you feel like sharing some of your cards, I'd be happy to hear from you. Write me a mail: [thibault.schiemann@gmail.com](mailto:thibault.schiemann@gmail.com)