5 Games to Play on Your Next Virtual Happy Hour

Need to avoid (yet another) awkward silence? Be prepared with one of these games next time.

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Despite some states re-opening for business, it looks like most Americans will be following social distancing guidelines through the summer (and potentially into the fall). One silver lining of this situation is that people are using the opportunity to catch up with long-lost friends and family on virtual calls and happy hours.

My extended family actually started doing monthly virtual trivia nights long before we all started social distancing, which we've of course continued through the quarantine. I've also done game nights with other groups of friends from around the country.

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During a time that no one really has exciting news to share, playing a game can be a good way to spend time with friends without having the pressure to keep everyone entertained. I've tested out a few game platforms over the past two months, and below are five of my favorites for Zoom calls and virtual happy hours. I've also noted which platforms are easiest for

each type of group.

Jackbox Games

Jackbox has been around for years but has been surging in popularity – at least among my friends – in the past few weeks. You can buy individual games (on sale right now for $4.99) or buy a party pack with multiple games (on sale for $12.49). The person who's hosting the game will share their screen on a Zoom or other conference call, and everyone else will log on to jackbox.tv to play. The group I play with has the Jackbox Party Pack 2, which comes with five games. My personal favorite is Fibbage, which is a game where everyone completes a sentence (e.g. "The mayor of Rabbit Hash, Kentucky is a _____") with a lie believable enough that the other players will fall for it. You get points for other people believing your lie and for picking out the truth. There's a bit of a learning curve on some of the games, but you'll figure it out if you play multiple rounds.

Kahoot!

If you're into trivia, Kahoot! is the easiest-to-use platform my family has found. One person hosts and sends out a challenge, and the rest of the people on the call complete rounds of trivia on the Kahoot app. Kahoot's other games lean toward learning as well – brain teasers, sciences quizzes and lots of different trivia topics. You can play on kahoot.it, but most players use the app, so make sure that everyone in your group is somewhat tech-savvy (for reference, my grandma can usually figure it out just fine).

Scattergories

More into classic board games? There's a Scattergories app that could be perfect for your group. You can play on your own

or create a group to play against your family and friends. It’s rated for ages 4 and older, so this is a good game to play if you have young children in your group – though they’ll need a smartphone or a tablet to download the app.

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House Party

For tech-savvy groups, the House Party app will let you see your friends and play games at the same time. To play, download and open the House Party app then invite the friends you want to play with to your “room.” Once they’re all there, make sure you lock the room so that other people can’t randomly join in on your game. Then, you can use the app to play Head’s Up, Trivia, a game called Chips and Guac and a Pictionary-esque one called Quick Draw. The nice thing about this app is that you don’t need to use a computer *and* a smartphone or tablet to participate, but everyone in your group will need to be able to download the app.

Low-Tech Trivia

A few weeks ago a group of my friends played a version of trivia that’s perfect if your group is large or if you have people who aren’t very good with technology. I call it low-tech trivia: Before you log on, everyone in the group creates a list of 10 trivia questions that can be related to any subject they want (sports, history, current events, general knowledge, etc.). Take turns reading your lists, and score based on the honor system – just make sure you have one person keeping track of everyone’s score from each round. I like this because it gets everyone thinking about game night earlier in the day as they pull together their lists of questions, and it’s more interactive than having one game master.

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