The Great Gift Wrap Mix-Up

Left Right Game

Everyone sits in a circle holding a wrapped gift. Each time you hear **LEFT**, pass the gift you are holding one seat to the left; each time you hear **RIGHT**, pass it one seat to the right. When the story ends, keep the gift in your hands.

Reader: go slowly and pause after every LEFT and RIGHT so the gifts can move. About 3 minutes · LEFT 10 times · RIGHT 11 times. Every gift ends up one seat to the right of where it started, so each player goes home with the gift from the person on their left.

On Christmas Eve, the Miller family sat down at the kitchen table to wrap the last of the presents. Grandma Joan looked at the clock and said, “We have one hour before church, so let’s do this **RIGHT**.”

Dad grabbed the tape and Mom grabbed the scissors, but Grandma shook her head. “No, no. The tape goes on the **LEFT** and the scissors go on the **RIGHT**.” So they swapped them **RIGHT** away.

Little Sam was in charge of the bows. He stuck a red bow on the **LEFT** side of every box and a green bow on the **RIGHT** side, until there were no bows **LEFT** at all.

Then Mom asked, “Did anyone write the name tags?” Nobody had. Dad looked **LEFT**. Sam looked **RIGHT**. Grandma looked **LEFT**, then **RIGHT**, then **LEFT** again. “Well,” she said, “we will just have to guess.”

The Great Gift Wrap Mix-Up

continued

The box with the scarf went on the **RIGHT** pile, for Aunt Rose. The box with the slippers went on the **LEFT** pile, for Uncle Ben. Or was it the other way around? Nobody could remember, and by now there was hardly any paper **LEFT**.

Just then the doorbell rang. Aunt Rose and Uncle Ben were **RIGHT** on time, and everyone rushed to hide the boxes. Sam pushed the **LEFT** pile under the couch, and Dad tucked the **RIGHT** pile behind the tree.

On Christmas morning, Aunt Rose opened a pair of fuzzy slippers two sizes too big, and Uncle Ben opened a pink scarf with sparkles. They looked at each other, laughed and traded gifts **RIGHT** there by the tree.

“You see?” said Grandma. “Every gift found the **RIGHT** person in the end. Now the only thing **LEFT** to do is have a merry Christmas!”

Bonus line: read it only if someone is holding their own gift

Oh, and one more thing: everybody, pass your gift to the **RIGHT**. Merry Christmas!

Santa’s Very Busy Night

Left Right Game

Everyone sits in a circle holding a wrapped gift. Each time you hear **LEFT**, pass the gift you are holding one seat to the left; each time you hear **RIGHT**, pass it one seat to the right. When the story ends, keep the gift in your hands.

Reader: go slowly and pause after every LEFT and RIGHT so the gifts can move. About 5 minutes · LEFT 16 times · RIGHT 15 times. Every gift ends up one seat to the left of where it started, so each player goes home with the gift from the person on their right.

It was the night before Christmas at the North Pole, and Santa was running late. “Where did I leave my list?” he called. “I had it here just a minute ago!”

Mrs. Claus pointed to the kitchen. “You **LEFT** it on the counter, **RIGHT** next to the cookie jar.” Santa grabbed the list, and a cookie, and hurried out the door.

Out in the barn, the elves were loading the sleigh. “Toys on the **LEFT**, books on the **RIGHT**!” called Pip, the head elf. The elves passed the presents from **LEFT** to **RIGHT** and from **RIGHT** to **LEFT** until the sleigh was piled high.

Santa climbed in and took the reins. “Is everything ready?” he asked. “All set,” said Pip, “but you **LEFT** your hat on the hook.” So Santa ran back for his hat and climbed in again.

Santa’s Very Busy Night

Up, up into the sky they flew. Over the first town, Santa turned **LEFT**. Over the second town, he turned **RIGHT**. Over the third town, he could not remember which way to go, so he turned **LEFT**, then **RIGHT**, then **LEFT** once more, until the reindeer were dizzy.

“Santa,” said the lead reindeer, “I think we should have turned **RIGHT** at that tall pine tree.” Santa looked at his map. “You are **RIGHT**,” he said, and he turned the sleigh around.

At the first house, Santa slid down the chimney. He **LEFT** a doll under the tree and a sled beside it. On the table he found milk and two cookies with a note: “Dear Santa, the cookie on the **LEFT** is for you. The cookie on the **RIGHT** is for the reindeer.” Santa ate the one on the **LEFT** and tucked the one on the **RIGHT** in his pocket.

House after house, the night went on: a train set to the **LEFT** of one tree, a pair of skates to the **RIGHT** of another. By the time the sky turned pink, the big sack was nearly empty. Only one small box was **LEFT**.

“Who is this one for?” Santa wondered. He turned the tag to the **LEFT** and to the **RIGHT**, but the name had worn off. Then he remembered. It was for Mrs. Claus. He had wrapped it himself, **RIGHT** before he **LEFT**.

Santa’s Very Busy Night

continued

Santa landed back at the North Pole just as the sun came up. Mrs. Claus was waiting at the door with a mug of cocoa. Inside the little box was a silver bell, just the **RIGHT** size for her charm bracelet.

“Merry Christmas, dear,” said Santa. “Now, is there any cocoa **LEFT** for me?” Mrs. Claus smiled. “**RIGHT** here,” she said. “I saved you the last cup.”

Bonus line: read it only if someone is holding their own gift

And before Santa goes to bed, everybody pass your gift one more time, to the **LEFT**. Merry Christmas!

Christmas on Maple Street

Left Right Game

Everyone sits in a circle holding a wrapped gift. Each time you hear **LEFT**, pass the gift you are holding one seat to the left; each time you hear **RIGHT**, pass it one seat to the right. When the story ends, keep the gift in your hands.

Reader: go slowly and pause after every LEFT and RIGHT so the gifts can move. About 4 minutes · LEFT 10 times · RIGHT 12 times. Every gift ends up two seats to the right of where it started, so each player goes home with the gift from the person on their left.

Every December on Maple Street, Christmas began the same way: with the big holiday catalog. We children spread it out on the living room rug and turned the pages **LEFT** and **RIGHT**, circling everything we wanted. My sister always circled the doll on the **LEFT** page. I always circled the red wagon on the **RIGHT**.

On the first Saturday of the month, Dad drove us downtown to see the store windows. In the window on the **LEFT**, a toy train went round and round a little snowy village. In the window on the **RIGHT**, an elf in a rocking chair waved at everyone who walked by.

Then came the tree. Dad tied it to the roof of the car and drove home very slowly, with Mom saying, "**LEFT** a little, now **RIGHT**," every time it slipped. Inside, the tree leaned to the **LEFT**, so Dad turned it to the **RIGHT**. Then it leaned to the **RIGHT**, so he turned it back to the **LEFT**. Mom said it looked just **RIGHT**.

Christmas on Maple Street

The bubble lights went on first. Then the glass ornaments, the paper chains we made at school and, last of all, the tinsel, one strand at a time, because Mom said throwing it was not the **RIGHT** way to do it. When we were done, there was not one strand **LEFT** in the box.

On Christmas Eve, carolers came up the walk. We opened the door, and they sang “Silent Night” **RIGHT** there on our front step while the snow came down. Mom gave them cocoa, and they **LEFT** singing all the way to the corner.

That night I lay awake, listening for sleigh bells. Was that a noise on the roof? I looked **LEFT** at the window and **RIGHT** at the door, but I fell asleep before I could find out.

In the morning, there it was by the tree: the red wagon, just like the one on the **RIGHT** page of the catalog. And for my sister, the doll from the **LEFT** page, with a pink bonnet and real curls.

The houses on Maple Street have changed, and the store windows are long gone. But every December I think of that catalog, the bubble lights and the carolers on our step, and I know the best part of Christmas was **RIGHT** there all along.

Bonus line: read it only if someone is holding their own gift

One last time, for old times’ sake: pass your gift to the **RIGHT**. Merry Christmas!