READY TO USE GAMES

# Board games

It’s January and the long dark nights and dubious weather mean that it’s unlikely that you’ll be able to go outside. So, why not embrace the season and hold a board game night? These suggestions might be beyond some children’s groups, but youth groups might well enjoy the low-tech challenge posed. They can be quite expensive to invest in, so ask around – there may be people in your congregation who would be willing to lend you their game.

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## Ticket to Ride

This is perhaps the most popular ‘new’ game of the last 20 years. Players collect different coloured cards in order to claim sections of railway track between different cities. They piece these sections together to complete route tickets and amass points. The difficulty comes when players need to claim the same sections of track – only one or two players can do so, so they can easily get blocked or trapped by their opponents!

Games can take up to an hour and the more you play, the more you develop your tactics. Do you collect lots of coloured cards before claiming sections of track? Do you start claiming as soon as you can? What happens when you’re blocked?

There are different versions available, some of which are expansion packs, so make sure you buy the full game first. The US or Europe versions are the full ones, the US version is the ‘basic’ game and is probably the one worth starting with.

For more information, visit the [Days of Wonder website](https://www.daysofwonder.com/tickettoride/en/usa/).

## Codenames

Played in pairs, with a grid of 25 words. Each one half of the pair has to communicate eight of the words in the grid to their partner, by saying a codename for their partner to deduce what the words are. Players can try to link together more than one word under one codename. The first pair to communicate all their words is the winner.

Pairs need to be careful – if a partner guesses one of their opponent’s words, then they make their opponent’s life easier. And there is one danger word, which if mentioned means that pairing lose the game immediately.

There are a few different variations of the game, but it would be good to start with the original one. For more information, visit the [Codenames](https://codenamesgame.com/) website.

## Pandemic and Forbidden Island

These two games work along the same principles. Both are collaborative games – players work together to overcome the spread of a deadly disease across the world (Pandemic) or to escape from an island which is rapidly disappearing.

Each player takes on a different role, with different skills and different options for gameplay. Players have to discuss the best way of solving the different problems that arise during the game, making best use of each other’s talents and options.

While playing Pandemic might be a bit too soon after the events of the past few years (!), both games encourage teamwork and discussion of different strategies. They are good for bringing people out of their shell, helping them to give their opinion and listen to each other. These games are good for younger young people, as well as older ones.

Different versions of both games are available. For more information about Forbidden Island, click [here](https://gamewright.com/product/Forbidden-Island). For more about Pandemic, visit the [Z-Man Games website.](https://www.zmangames.com/en/games/pandemic/)

## Settlers of Catan

Players collect resources in order to build roads, settlements and cities, collect soldiers and thwart their opponents in an attempt to get the game-winning ten points.

Settlers of Catan is a longer, more considered game than some of those already mentioned, but it encourages strategy and bargaining skills, as players can barter for resources with others, as well as obtaining them from the board. There is a bit of luck about the game, as dice play a part. However, there are different ways of playing which can overcome this element.

For more information, visit the [Settlers of Catan](https://www.catan.com/) website.

There are lots of other board games to try – Carcassonne, Wingspan, Azul or Hint, as well as the more traditional Scrabble, Cluedo and Articulate. And don’t forget those youth-group stalwarts – Uno, Jenga and plain old cards!

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