

# ***On the Fly!***

Welcome to *On the Fly*, the world's only musical improvisation game! Unless there's another one. We haven't really checked. This game will guide you through the jungles of improvisation as you invent your own beautiful compositions, and maybe some less than beautiful ones, all right there on the spot instantly out of your own heads! Sounds fun, doesn't it?

## **Contents:**

Three dice - one with symbols, one with time signatures, one with modes.

A tray, with a grid of keys printed.

A deck of cards depicting contours in a line graph format.

Optional: two sets of Wild Card Booster Packs.

Optional: two "advanced" dice

## **Materials needed:**

Printer: All of the core materials are in a single PDF document, which can be printed in black and white. The Wild Card Booster Packs are in a separate document, which can be printed in the same way.

Paper: While normal printer paper can be used, heavier paper like cardstock produces more durable and user-friendly results. The PDF is formatted for 8 ½" x 11" dimensions.

Tape: A basic craft tape, such as Scotch tape, is sufficient.

Scissors: Simple scissors are necessary for assembly.

## **Assembly process:**

For the tray, first cut out the corners according to the outline. Second, fold along dotted lines and use tape to attach edges, forming a flat tray with 90 degree sides.

For the dice, first cut along the outline. Second, fold along the interior lines and use tape to attach edges, forming a cube with one-inch sides.

For cards, simply cut along the centerline. Each card occupies half of a typical sheet of paper.


## **GAMEPLAY**

First, choose a card.







Second, roll the variable die into the tray.

Third, roll the other two dice off to the side.

The variable determined by the die will be the focus of your improvisation. As a group, your challenge is to match that variable's development to the contour on the card you pulled. For

instance, rolling the symbol  and choosing the card (increasing upward) should result in a piece where the volume starts out low and steadily increases.

The variable die has six symbols, which are as follows:

	<b>Volume:</b> As the contour line gets higher, you all play louder! This one is pretty straightforward.
	<b>Tempo:</b> The higher the line, the faster you play - keep up! The low parts might get really really slow, but you're not in a hurry, are you?
	<b>Register:</b> The line gets higher, you play higher notes. The line dips lower, and so do you. Try to use the full range of your instrument.
	<b>Consonance:</b> When the contour line is higher, you all play nice pretty harmonized things. When it dips down low, play gnarly dissonant noisy things.
	<b>Density:</b> If the contour line goes up, just play more stuff, fill all the space, make lots and lots of sound. If it goes down, play less. Be sparse. Minimal.
	<b>Roller's Choice:</b> Choose one of the five variables listed above!

The landing point of the variable die determines the key of your improvisation: the box in which the majority of the die lands is your starting key. If the die is split evenly between two boxes on the grid, the roller may choose between the two keys.

(If you choose to include the Wild Card Booster Packs, drawing a wild card voids the variable from the first die - it simply becomes a marker to select the key.)

The two remaining dice determine mode and time signature. The mode die is evenly split between major and minor, whereas the time signature die consists of three sides of 4/4, two sides of 3/4, and one side of 6/8.

There are two dice in the materials document that are labeled "advanced." There is one for mode and one for meter, and you can choose to substitute one or both of them for the original dice. The variable die remains the same.

The advanced mode die uses abbreviations, which indicate the following:

MAJ	Major
MIX	Mixolydian
LYD	Lydian
mi	minor
hmi	harmonic minor
phr	phrygian

**Once you have all the factors decided, get to playing! You want to create a piece that fits all your variables and challenges and last somewhere from 3 to 10 minutes.**

You may find it helpful or interesting to time your improvisations, or even record them.

**Some ground rules:**

No planning. No talking. No, you can't discuss it. Just play.

No visual cues. No looking, no nods, no gestures. If it's tempting, you can play facing away from each other, or with closed eyes, or in the dark.

Talk about it afterwards. How did it go? Take a look at the debrief questions and strategies in this document for some suggestions.

Most importantly, HAVE FUN!

### **How to Debrief**

What was good, what could improve, and why did it turn out that way? What are you going to think about next time?

Consider these factors:

Length

Fidelity to the contour, challenge, or narrative.

Artistry/Precision/"Togetherness"

Ask:

Does everyone agree, or have the same impressions?

What circumstances or results created that impression?

How can you reproduce the aspects you liked?

How can you avoid the aspects you didn't like?

**Some techniques:**

**One Word Whip**

Everyone in the group chooses one word that they think describes the improvisation. If it felt good to everyone, you can stop there, but it can be helpful to discuss some or all of the words. (Write them down if you need to.)

**Rose, Thorn, and Bud**

Each member of the group says one thing that went well (rose), one thing that could have gone better (thorn), and one thing that was surprising, interesting, or developing but not quite there yet (bud).

### **Wild Card Booster Packs**

There are two sets of booster packs, Challenges and Narratives. You can shuffle either one, or both, into your deck of contour cards. A wild card replaces a contour card, so you don't need to draw again.

In Challenges, each card describes a mini-game challenge that the group must try to meet. Narratives are stories or scenarios that should guide your improvisation; think of the narrative card like a short film that you have to score.