



Couple Up

A game about finding your match and making the grade, by the members of the 2010 WonderLab.

It's designed as a game to be played at an icebreaker for an event - it gets people talking and thinking about the dynamics in the room. All players must start in the Foyer. find a partner, (according to some restrictions given to them on cards), and then approach the Bouncer to see if they will be allowed to enter the Upper Club. The Bouncer may or may not approve them. If successful, they move into the Upper Club and collect their drinks and membership cards. If they fail, they need to return to the Foyer and see if they can figure out how to win the Bouncer's approval.

What you need to play

- Somewhere between 10 and 50 people.
- Two spaces, each big enough to accommodate all the people, separated by some kind of boundary which can be policed by a Bouncer - a velvet rope would be great.
- A set of cards, as outlined below.
- Drinks, for members of the Upper Club.
- Someone to introduce the game, someone to act as a Bouncer, someone to welcome people to the Upper Club.
- You may also want to have a few roving helpers, to make sure everyone follows the rules, and advise anyone who isn't sure what to do.

The Cards

- One Fortune card per player. These cards should all be different and should include fortunes like: 'Your perfect match was born in another country' or 'Your perfect match is wearing blue underwear' or 'Your perfect match hates their mother'. The critical words in each of these fortunes (born, country, blue, underwear, hates, mother etc) should be underlined.
- There should also be a small number of 'Joker' fortune card - about one per 10 normal Fortune cards, and these should be shuffled in with the Fortune cards at the start of the game. These should all read 'Your perfect match has a card that is different from this one'. No words should be underlined on the Joker cards.
- One Number card per player. These should be prepared as follows:



- For up to 10 players - an equal number of cards numbered 1 and 2
- For 11 to 20 players - an equal number of cards numbered 1, 2, and 3
- For 21 to 30 players - an equal number of cards numbered 1,2,3 and 4
- For 31 to 40 players - an equal number of cards numbered 1,2,3,4, and 5
- For 41 to 50 players - an equal number of cards numbered 1,2,3,4,5, and 6

- One Membership card per player. This should be marked on one side as an Upper Club membership card, and on the other with the phrase "Sorry, I'm taken".

The Rules

- The game requires an even number of players. If you have an odd number, a member of the gamerunning team who does NOT know the secret rule (see below) should join in.
- Players begin in the foyer and must attempt to make their way into the Upper Club. There should be drinks available in the Upper Club, but none available in the Foyer. Players should only be able to move between the rooms via a cordon which is policed by the Bouncer.
- As the game begins, all players are given a random Number card and a random Fortune card. They may show their Number card to anyone and declare it publicly, but they MUST keep their Fortune card secret, and must NOT say aloud any of the words underlined on their Fortune card.
- To enter the Upper Club, players must approach the bouncer, but will only be considered for entry by the bouncer if they pledge that they are a perfect match
- To find a perfect match, players must first find other players whose number complements their own. In a game with cards numbered 1 and 2, they must find another player so that between them their cards add up to 3. With cards numbered 1,2 and 3, to 4. With cards numbered 1,2,3 and 4, to 5. With cards numbered 1,2,3,4 and 5, to 6. With cards numbered 1,2,3,4,5, and 6, to 7.
- They must then try to discover if that person fulfills their fortune, and if they fulfill the other person's. They must do this without using any of the words underlined on their Fortune card. If they fulfill each other's fortunes, then they are a perfect match and may approach the bouncer. If not, they must try to find someone else whose number complements theirs.
- When they approach the bouncer, he will check that their number cards complement. He will also inspect their Fortune cards, and ask each to pledge that he/she meets the other's fortune. If they fail either of these tests, he will send them back to the Foyer. If they pass these tests, he will attract the attention of the room, and announce loudly that they are to be considered for entry to the Upper Club.
- With the other guests looking on, he will silently appraise them against the Secret Rule (see below), and announce either 'Welcome to the Upper Club' and allow them past the rope, or 'I'm sorry, but there's something not quite right about you.' and indicate they should return to the Foyer.



- Once in the Upper Club, guests are able to talk freely. They should be given a drink and their Membership Card, and be told that they are now able to move between the Foyer and the Upper Club freely, under two regulations. One is that, while in the Foyer, they must carry a glass with them at all times. The second is that, while in the Foyer, they cannot speak to anyone without a glass other than to say 'Sorry, I'm taken'.
- The game ends when all players have made their way from the Foyer to the Upper Club.

The Secret Rule

Before the game begins, the Bouncer should decide on a secret rule. This rule will govern which perfect matches are allowed into the Upper Club. It must be something which is:

- a) clearly visible across a room and
- b) can be accomplished by all players.

This is to ensure that players stand a chance of figuring out what the rule is, and of ensuring everyone can comply with it. A bad secret rule would be 'to enter the Upper Club you must have blue eyes' because it would be hard for most players to spot the eye colour of successful applicants, and impossible for them to change their own. A good rule would be 'to enter the Upper Club, you must be showing your elbows', since it's easy to spot and easy to change. Other options might be 'at least one person must have glasses' (since you can borrow pairs, and people might have extra sunglasses to share), or 'you must be holding hands'. The bouncer should pick a rule which he's confident will work with the room (count how many people have glasses before choosing that rule, for example), and then - crucially - he MUST keep the rule secret until the game is over. When turning applicants away, he must only say 'There's something not quite right about you', and not reveal the nature of the rule.

The End Game

In some cases, as the Foyer empties into the Upper Club, you may be left with a few people who can't find their match. Often, their numbers will be compatible but their Fortunes won't. The gamerunners may want to remind people that the Bouncer can't actually check the veracity of their fortunes. Are they willing to lie to get into the Upper Club? In rare cases, you'll be left with some players whose numbers aren't compatible. In this case (depending on your event), you can either leave them ostracised in the Foyer, unable to talk to any Upper Club members, or you can ask the Bouncer if he's willing to grant them a special day pass. He'll usually say yes.



Once the game is over, ask the Upper Club members what they think the secret rule is, and then tell them the truth. Let players keep their membership cards, but reclaim Fortune and Number cards for future playthroughs.

Suggestion for Fortunes

We recommend that you write your own fortunes, calibrated to the kind of players and event you have in mind. We do think it works well if the fortunes are about real things from the real world, and if there is a range of factual, subjective and emotional statements. The fortunes we used were (words in bold were underlined):

- Your match was not **born** in **Britain**.
- Your match is an **only child**.
- Your match has a **phone** other than an **iPhone**.
- Your match works does **work** for **charity**.
- Your match is a **Flickr Pro** user.
- Your match has **sung** in **public** at least once.
- Your match has **children**.
- Your match is a very keen **cook**.
- Your match, really likes your **shoes**.
- Your match has a **food allergy**.
- Your match hates **cake**.
- Your match got here by **bike**.
- Your match is **afraid** of **thunder**.
- Your match got caught in the **rain** earlier.
- Your match is a **vegetarian**.
- Your match used to **work** at the **BBC**.
- Your match **ate breakfast** this morning.
- Your match knows a Hue and Cry song.
- Your match has a **birthday** this month.
- Your match is really cute.
- Your match **wrote** on a **Post-It** note today.
- Your match has played the party game **Werewolf**.
- Your match has tried **cannabis** and more than one other **drug**.
- Your match is **afraid** of **wasps**.
- Your match has won an **award**.
- Your match **hates** their **mother**.
- Your match has **voted Conservative**