

# THE GAME OF SPOONS

A stylized orange spoon graphic is positioned vertically, overlapping the letter 'S' in the word 'SPOONS'. The bowl of the spoon is at the top, and the handle curves downwards.

## The Game of Spoons Instructions

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**Note:** If these instructions are difficult to read, you may want to print these pages onto coloured paper, or use software that adds a coloured overlay onto the screen.

## Theory Behind The Game

The "Game of Spoons" is a board game which is meant to give a very simple representation of what it's like to live as a spoonie. The game takes place over the course of a week, split up into days. You start in the morning and you finish at night. During the day you will do different activities like eating breakfast, getting dressed, or going shopping.

### What is a spoonie?



**Spoonie:** Someone who lives with a chronic illness who must make hard choices every day on what activities to spend their limited energy on.



The word **spoonie** comes from a story called **The Spoon Theory**, written by Christine Miserandino, who has lupus.

In the story, she recounts a time when a friend asked how it felt to live with a chronic illness. They were in a cafeteria, so she quickly grabbed a bunch of spoons to represent the energy she spends every day. She explained that every time she does an activity, like taking a shower, it costs some "spoons", or energy.

She invited her friend to pretend to live her life. Every time her friend did an activity, she would take a spoon away. Her friend quickly got frustrated by having so few spoons, and through that, started to understand a little bit of what it was like to live with a chronic illness.

That is why some people with chronic illness call themselves **spoonies** and use **spoons** to mean energy. You can read the whole story at Christine Miserandino's website

<https://butyoudontlooksick.com/>

## The Purpose of the Game

This game is designed to help **able bodied people** (people who do not have a chronic illness or a disability) learn what it's like to live with a chronic illness.

However, real life is much more complicated than a simple board game could cover. For example, in the game, everyone starts out with the same number of spoons, but in real life, each person has a different number of spoons depending on lots of different factors. You can read more about that in the **Intersectionality** section below.

The Game of Spoons isn't meant to show you exactly what it's like to live with a chronic illness, but it is meant to introduce you to the idea, to help you think about things from a different perspective, and to spark discussion.

If you are playing with a spoonie, then it might be a good idea to ask them respectfully about the differences between the board game and their life. You could learn a lot about them that you never knew before.

## What is Intersectionality?

There are many different things that can affect the number of spoons somebody has. For example...

- What illness you have
- How severe your illness is
- Other illnesses or health problems that you have

But there are also things outside of physical health that could affect this.

Some people are **discriminated** against (treated badly) because they belong to a certain group of people or have a certain characteristic. For example...

- Being BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic), meaning not White
- Being a woman
- Being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer
- Being transgender or gender non-conforming
- Belonging to a certain religion, such as being a Muslim
- Having a mental health condition
- Being poor or working class
- And of course, being disabled or having a chronic illness

Being discriminated against usually means you have problems other people don't have, or find it harder to do the same activities as everyone else. For example...

- Women are usually paid less for the same job than men. In the UK, women working as **managers, senior officials or directors** earn on average **£22.07 less per hour** than men in the same industry. (Office for National Statistics, "Gender pay gap in the UK: 2019".)
- Black people are usually treated more suspiciously by the authorities compared to White people. Between April 2018 and March 2019, there were **4 stop and searches for every 1,000 White people**, compared with **38 for every 1,000 Black people**. (Home Office, "Police powers and procedures, England and Wales year ending March 2019".)

When somebody belongs to more than one of the discriminated groups, we call that **intersectionality**. That means the discriminated groups you belong to **intersect**, or affect each other, making it even harder than if you just belonged to one. Many

spoonies also belong to another discriminated group and experience intersectionality in their day to day lives. This leads to less spoons for every day life because they have to spend more spoons on navigating these problems.

The Game of Spoons doesn't cover intersectionality because that would make the game very complicated. However, it's important to learn about intersectionality and how being discriminated against can affect somebody's spoon level, as this is a very real problem for many spoonies in real life.

While you're playing the game, perhaps have a think about how intersectionality could make each of the activities more difficult. Could being a Black spoonie make it more difficult to go shopping than a White spoonie? Why?

# How to Play

## Game Stats

Players	Length	Objective
2 - 4 players	Approx. 1 hour for full game (not including set up time)	To finish the game with the most Happiness Tokens

## Age Range

Ages 10+

*Note:* The game was designed to represent the life of an adult spoonie, so spoonie children are unlikely to find it relatable to their life. However, non-spoonie children of spoonie parents might find it helps them understand more about their parent's life.

## You Will Need

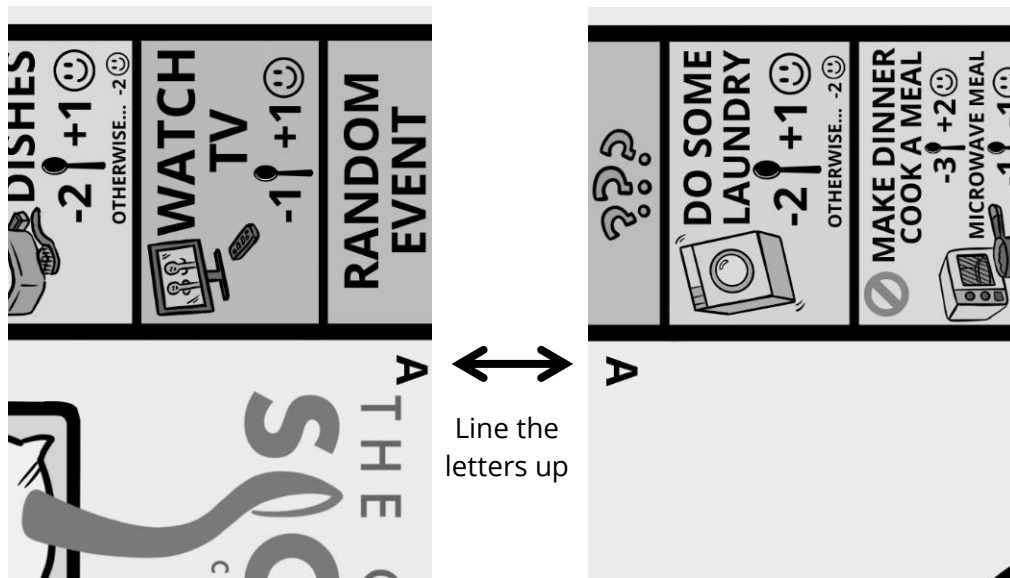
- A printer
- A4 paper (or card)
- Scissors
- A 6-sided die (if you don't have this, there are alternatives suggested in the next section)

## How to Set Up The Game

**Step 1.** Print off the game on A4 paper, in either colour or black and white.

*Note:* You may want to print the game onto card or coloured paper if you think you may have trouble handling thin pieces of paper or reading black text on a white background.

**Step 2.** Three sheets of paper will have squares on it like a board game. Line these pages up by putting the letter tabs next to one another. For example, Tab A will go next to Tab A, Tab B to Tab B, and so on. This will be your full board. You may want to put some weights on the sheets so they don't slide around as much, or use bluetack to attach them to the table.



**Step 3.** Cut out the cards on the "Random Events" page by following the dotted lines, and put them in a face-down pile next to the board.

**Step 4.** Cut out the Tokens by following the dotted lines.

**Step 5.** Choose one of the Player Tokens and put it on the Start square. Give every player 5 Spoon Tokens and 5 Happiness Tokens. Put the Calendar Token on Monday.



**Happiness Token**



**Spoon Token**



**Player Token**



**Calendar Token**

*Note:* If the paper tokens are too fiddly for you, you can swap them out for anything you have around the house (buttons, beads, M&Ms, etc); alternatively, you could keep score using a pencil and paper.

**Step 6.** Get a six-sided die to play with.

*Note:* If you don't have any dice to hand, you can use a free dice-rolling website like <https://rolladie.net/> or a free dice app such as Dice by SeableApps (Google Play Store) or iDice by Lukas Lubbe (App Store). Alternatively, you could even write the numbers 1-6 on pieces of paper and put them in a hat to draw out at random!

**Step 7.** You are now ready to play!

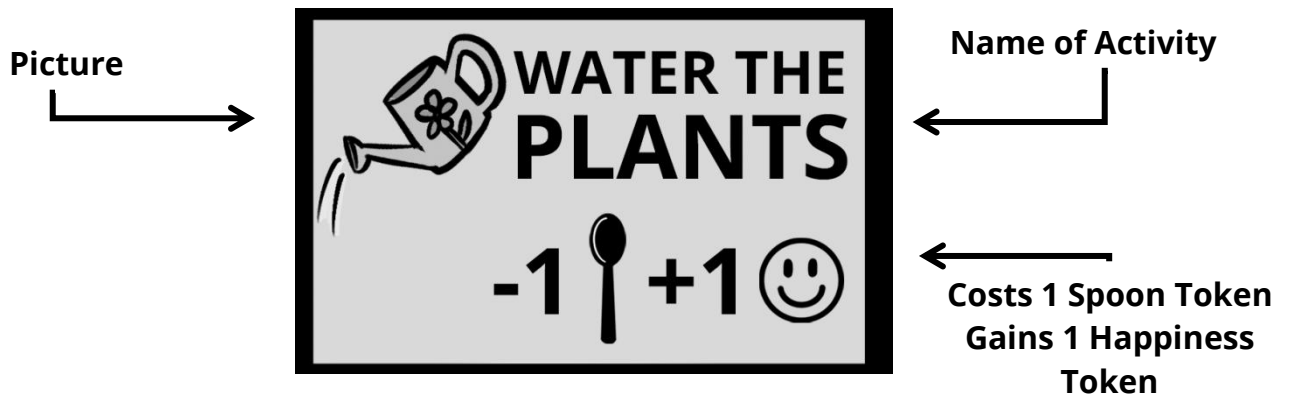
## **Beginning the Game**

The game puts you in the shoes of a spoonie (someone with a chronic illness) during a **week** in their life. Each turn around the board represents **one day**.

Beginning at the Start square, you must make your way through the board until you reach the End, then repeat until you have finished the whole week.



- The Spoon Tokens represents how much energy it takes to do each activity, **for example**, it costs 1 Spoon Token to water the plants.
- The Happiness Tokens represent how happy completing the activity makes you, **for example**, watering the plants gains you 1 Happiness Token.



- You cannot have a negative amount of Tokens. The lowest number you can have of Spoon or Happiness Tokens is zero.
- Your goal is to reach the end of the game with the most Happiness Tokens.

At the start of the game give every player **5 Spoon Tokens** and **5 Happiness Tokens**.

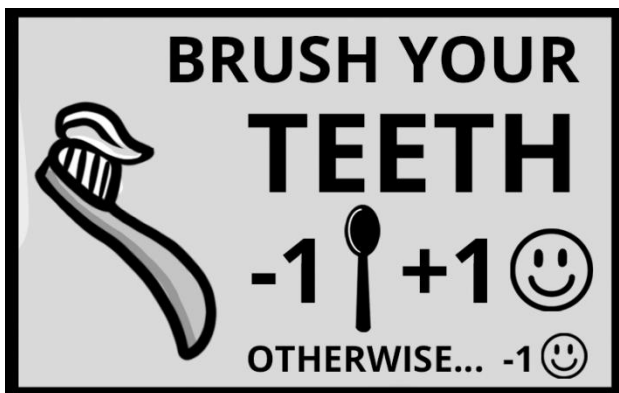
To begin the game, everyone rolls a 6-sided die and the person who rolls the highest goes first. The next player is on their right.

### During Your Turn

At the start of your turn, roll the die and move that many number of spaces. The space that you land on will have an activity on it. **You can choose to do this activity or not.**


- Most activities will cost Spoon Tokens and give you Happiness Tokens. **You cannot do an activity if you do not have enough Spoon Tokens for it.**

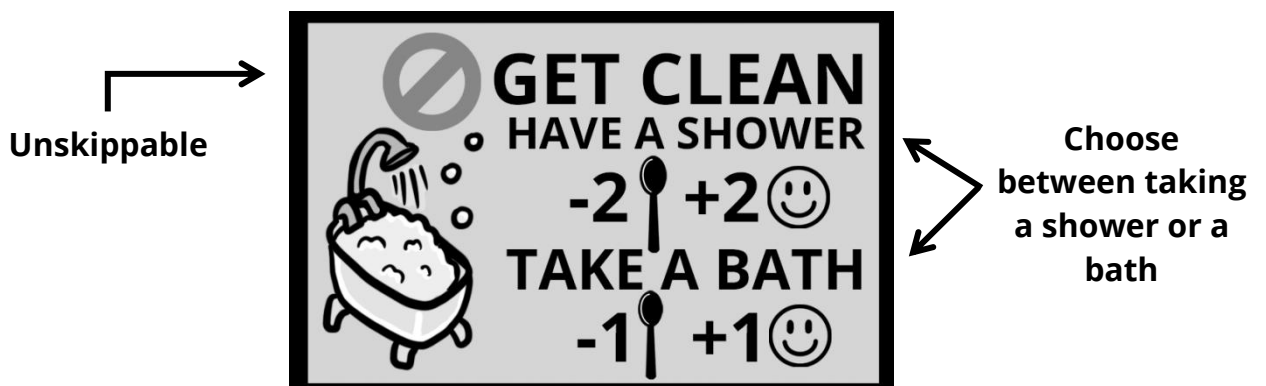
- Some activities will give you Happiness Tokens but not cost any Spoon Tokens.
- **Penalty Spaces.** Some activities will have a cost if you don't do them! **If you land on them and choose not to do the activity**, you must lose some Tokens as a penalty. The penalty will say **"Otherwise..."** followed by the cost of not doing the activity.



If you choose to brush your teeth, you lose 1 Spoon Token and gain 1 Happiness Token.

If you choose not to, you must take a penalty and lose 1 Happiness Token!

- **Unskippable Spaces.** A few activities will be **unskippable**, which means **if you land on them you must do that activity**. Unskippable activities will have a crossed out circle icon on them . If the Spoon Token cost is more than your current number of Spoons, your Spoon Tokens goes to zero.
- Some activities give you choices, with different Spoon costs and Happiness gains.



If you land on a Random Event Square, you must draw one card from the Random Event deck. See the **Random Event Cards** section of these instructions for more information.

### **When you reach the Get Dressed space...**

- Stop for a moment. You must choose whether to get dressed (costing 2 Spoon Tokens).
- If you get dressed, continue your turn down the **Go Out** path with the remaining number of spaces you had left.
- If you do not get dressed, continue your turn down the **Stay Home** path with the remaining number of spaces you had left.
- The Go Out path has greater costs but greater rewards, whereas the Stay Home path is safer.
- The blue arrows do not count as a space, simply skip over them.

**If at any point you run out of Spoon Tokens**, whether by choice or not, you must **"take a nap" (miss 1 turn)** and **lose 10 Happiness Tokens**. After missing your turn, roll a die to see how many Spoon Tokens you regain from taking your nap. Roll again to see how many squares you travel and continue playing as normal.

**If at any point you run out of Happiness Tokens**, you must lose 1 Spoon Token every turn until your Happiness goes above zero.

## Random Event Cards

The Random Event Cards are placed in a face-down pile next to the board. If you land on a Random Event square, you must draw one Random Event Card, show the other players what the card says, then follow the instructions on the card.

Random Event Cards will have an event or activity on them, just like the squares on the board. All Random Event Cards are **unskippable**.

- A few of the Random Event Cards will be the **Ask a Friend To Help Bonus Card**. Keep this card with you and play it at any time **during the next day** to allow you to remove the Spoon Token cost for any activity you land on.

- The card can only be played **once** and then must be put back at the bottom of the deck.

- You must use your Bonus Card during the next day or you will lose it at the end of that day.

- The Bonus Card can't be used to remove the Spoon Token cost for other Random Event Cards.

- **For example...** I draw a Bonus Card during Monday and keep it with me. I finish the rest of Monday and start playing Tuesday. During Tuesday I land on the "Go for a Walk" square, and use my Bonus Card to avoid losing 3 Spoon Tokens. I then put the card back into the Random Event Cards deck.



**Bonus Card**

- If I didn't play my Bonus Card during Tuesday, I would have to get rid of it at the end of Tuesday.

Once you have finished with the card, put it back at the bottom of the deck. Shuffle the deck at the end of each day.

## **When You Reach The End Square**

Reaching the End Square means you have reached the end of the day.

The player who reaches the End square fastest gets some bonus Happiness Tokens.

The amount depends on the number of players.

- **If you have 2 players...** The first player to reach the End gets 1 bonus Happiness Token.
- **If you have 3 or 4 players...** The first player to reach the End gets 2 bonus Happiness Tokens. The second player to reach the End gets 1 bonus Happiness Token.

These bonus tokens can be collected at the end of each day.

### **Once you have collected your bonus Happiness Tokens...**

- Move your Player Token to the Bedtime Square and keep it there until all other Players have reached the End Square.
- Discard any extra Bonus Cards that haven't been used in time.

## **Once the last player has reached the End Square...**

- Everyone gains 5 Spoon Tokens.
- Everyone draws one Random Event card and follows the instructions on it.
- Move all the Player Tokens to the Start Square.
- Shuffle the Random Events Cards.
- Move the Calendar Token to the next day of the week.

It is now the start of the next day. Play again, and keep playing through the days until you have finished Sunday.

*Note:* If you wish to play a shorter version of the game, you may choose to end the game at the end of any day and move straight onto counting the points.

## **The Winner**

Once you have finished Sunday, add up all the Happiness Tokens that each player has. Whoever has the most, wins!

## Credits

Thank you for playing the Game of Spoons!

This game was created and illustrated by Julian Gray, a disabled artist and spoonie based in Manchester.

You can find out more about him at

<https://www.juliangrayart.com>



This game was commissioned by DaDaFest for their 2020 International Online Festival "Translations".

DaDaFest is a disabled and d/Deaf arts organisation based in Liverpool.

You can find out more about them at

<https://www.dadafest.co.uk/>

Credit for the Spoon Theory goes to Christine Miserandino. You can find out more about her work at

<https://butyoudontlooksick.com/>

