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The Pictionary Game Night Guide for 2026

Pictionary needs three things: people, something to draw on and good words. This guide covers the rules, how to pick the right difficulty for your group, word ideas for eleven categories, timer and scoring settings, ways to play with teams and classes, and tips for drawing hard words.

The rules in six steps

1. **Add players.** Two or more players, or two teams.
2. **Set the timer.** 60 seconds a turn is a good start.
3. **Reveal the word.** Only the drawer looks at the word.
4. **Draw.** No letters, no numbers and no talking. Pointing at the drawing is fine.
5. **Score.** A right guess gives a point to the drawer and the guesser.
6. **Next turn.** The next player draws a new word.

Which difficulty for which group

Difficulty	Words like	Best for
Easy	Dog, Apple, Car, Sun, Ball	Young children and warm-up rounds
Medium	Backpack, Guitar, Pirate, Thunder	Families and mixed groups
Hard	Telescope, Volcano, Imagination	Adults and experienced players
Mixed	A third of each level	Groups with different ages

Timer and scoring

- **Kids:** 90 seconds a turn, and give a point for a close guess.
- **Families:** 60 seconds a turn, first team to 10 points wins.
- **Adults:** 30 to 45 seconds a turn, with hard words worth 2 points.

Word ideas for eleven categories

Category	Easy	Harder
Animals	Cat, Fish, Bird	Penguin, Octopus, Chameleon
Food	Apple, Cake, Pizza	Spaghetti, Sushi, Popcorn
Actions / Verbs	Run, Jump, Sleep	Skateboarding, Juggling, Fishing
Objects	Chair, Key, Cup	Umbrella, Vacuum, Ladder
Places	House, Park, Beach	Lighthouse, Airport, Castle
People / Professions	Baby, Doctor, Chef	Firefighter, Astronaut, Pilot
Fantasy / Sci-Fi	Dragon, Robot, Ghost	Portal, Time Machine, Unicorn
Holiday	Gift, Snowman, Pumpkin	Fireworks, Reindeer, Easter Egg
Nature	Sun, Tree, Rain	Rainbow, Volcano, Waterfall
Technology	Phone, Car, Camera	Satellite, Headphones, Drone
Random	Hat, Star, Book	Telescope, Parachute, Treasure Map

Ways to play with teams and classes

- **Team relay.** Each team member draws for 20 seconds, then passes the pen.
- **All play.** One drawer from each team draws the same word at the same time.
- **Classroom vocabulary.** Use this week's words as the list, so the game is also revision.
- **ESL rounds.** The guesser must say the word in English, spelled right, to score.
- **Charades swap.** Use the same word list, but act the words out instead of drawing.

Tips for drawing hard words

- **Split the word.** Draw "sun" and "flower" for Sunflower, with a plus sign between them.
- **Draw where it lives.** For Penguin, draw ice and snow first.
- **Draw what it does.** For Telescope, draw a person looking up at stars.
- **Use arrows.** Point at the part that matters most.
- **Start big and simple.** Add small details only when the group is close.

Game night checklist

☐ A word list with enough words: about 3 for each player, each round.

☐ Paper and markers, a whiteboard, or a screen to draw on.

☐ A timer everyone can see or hear.

☐ Teams picked and a score sheet ready.

☐ The words printed or on one phone, so only the drawer sees them.

Score sheet

Team or player	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Total

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