Left Right Christmas Game

4 stories to read aloud, from preschool to grown-ups

How to play

1. Sit or stand in a circle. Everyone holds one small wrapped gift.
2. One person reads a story aloud, slowly.
3. Each time you hear LEFT, pass your gift to the left. Each time you hear RIGHT, pass it to the right.
4. When the story ends, the gift in your hands is yours to open.

Pick your story

Story	Best for	Passes	Time	Your gift ends up
Pip the Elf Gets Dressed Page 2	Ages 4 to 7	15	1 min	1 seat to the right
The Wright Family Christmas Eve Page 3	Ages 6 to adult	32	2 min	8 seats to the right
The Night in Bethlehem Page 4	Ages 5 to adult	15	2 min	1 seat to the left
Santa Takes a Wrong Turn Page 5	Ages 8 to adult	36	2 min	2 seats to the right

Make it work for your group

Little kids: tie a red ribbon on every right wrist before you start. Read slowly and point the way.

No gifts: pass one candy cane, a bell or a wrapped book each. In a classroom, pass a pencil or a sticker sheet.

Big groups: make two circles with one reader in the middle, or stand in one long line that wraps around the room.

Round two: read the same story twice as fast. Anyone who passes the wrong way says "Ho ho ho!"

Fair endings: the last column shows how far each gift moves. If that number equals the number of players, pass once more.

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Pip the Elf Gets Dressed

Left right Christmas game · Ages 4 to 7 · about 1 min

Pass your gift LEFT or RIGHT every time you hear the word.

Pip the elf woke up **RIGHT** on time.

He pulled a mitten onto his **LEFT** hand. He pulled a mitten onto his **RIGHT** hand. But one sock was **LEFT** under the bed!

Pip looked **LEFT.** Pip looked **RIGHT.** There it was, **RIGHT** beside his boots.

He put his **LEFT** foot in a boot. He put his **RIGHT** foot in a boot. Then Pip ran **RIGHT** out the door to help Santa.

He hung a bell on the **LEFT** side of the sleigh. He hung a bell on the **RIGHT** side of the sleigh.

"Is anything **LEFT** to do?" asked Santa.

"Not one thing is **LEFT,"** said Pip.

"Then we are **RIGHT** on time," said Santa. "Merry Christmas!"

For the reader

LEFT 7 times, RIGHT 8 times, 15 passes in all. Each gift ends up 1 seat to the right.

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The Wright Family Christmas Eve

Left right Christmas game · Ages 6 to adult · about 2 min

Pass your gift LEFT or RIGHT every time you hear the word. Every time you hear the name WRIGHT, pass to the right as well.

It was Christmas Eve, and the **WRIGHT** family had exactly one hour **LEFT** before Grandma arrived. Mr. **WRIGHT** looked **RIGHT** at the tree and sighed. The star was leaning to the **LEFT.** He nudged it **RIGHT.** Now it leaned too far **RIGHT,** so Mrs. **WRIGHT** nudged it **LEFT** again. "Leave it," she said. "It looks just **RIGHT."**

In the kitchen, Tommy **WRIGHT** was guarding the cookies. There had been two dozen. There were nine **LEFT.** "The dog did it," said Tommy, with frosting on his **LEFT** cheek and sprinkles on his **RIGHT.** His sister Susie **WRIGHT** walked **RIGHT** past him and took one more. Eight **LEFT.**

Then the doorbell rang. Grandma **WRIGHT** stood on the porch with a suitcase in her **LEFT** hand and a pie in her **RIGHT.** "Am I early?" she asked. "You are **RIGHT** on time," said Mr. **WRIGHT.** "We **LEFT** the porch light on for you."

Grandma sat down in the chair to the **LEFT** of the fire, the one nobody else was allowed to sit in. She looked **LEFT** at the leaning star, then **RIGHT** at the eight cookies, and smiled. "Everything is just **RIGHT,"** she said.

By bedtime the pie was gone, the stockings were hung, and there was nothing **LEFT** to do but sleep. On Christmas morning, each one found a gift **RIGHT** where they hoped it would be.

So look at the gift in your hands. If it feels **RIGHT,** hold on tight. If not, too late: it is the only one you have **LEFT.** Merry Christmas from the **WRIGHT** family!

For the reader

LEFT 12 times, RIGHT 20 times, 32 passes in all. Each gift ends up 8 seats to the right.

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The Night in Bethlehem

Left right Christmas game · Ages 5 to adult · about 2 min

Pass your gift LEFT or RIGHT every time you hear the word. Retold from Luke 2 and Matthew 2.

Long ago, Mary and Joseph **LEFT** the town of Nazareth and set out for Bethlehem. The road was long, and by the time they arrived there was no room **LEFT** at the inn. So they stayed where the animals were kept. That night, **RIGHT** there beside a manger, baby Jesus was born. Mary wrapped him in cloths and laid him in the manger.

Out in the fields, shepherds were watching their sheep. An angel appeared **RIGHT** in front of them. "Do not be afraid," said the angel. "I bring you good news." Then the sky filled with angels, to the **LEFT** and to the **RIGHT,** singing glory to God.

When the angels had **LEFT,** the shepherds said, "Let us go **RIGHT** now." They **LEFT** their fields and hurried to Bethlehem, and they found the baby **RIGHT** where the angel had said.

Far away, wise men saw a new star and **LEFT** their homes to follow it. It led them **RIGHT** to the child. They bowed down and gave gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then they **LEFT** for home by another road.

Mary kept all these things in her heart. The shepherds went back to their fields praising God, with not one doubt **LEFT.** That is the story of the first Christmas, and it sits **RIGHT** at the heart of the season.

For the reader

LEFT 8 times, RIGHT 7 times, 15 passes in all. Each gift ends up 1 seat to the left.

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Santa Takes a Wrong Turn

Left right Christmas game · Ages 8 to adult · about 2 min

Pass your gift LEFT or RIGHT every time you hear the word.

Santa **LEFT** the North Pole at midnight, **RIGHT** on schedule. "Which way first?" asked Rudolph. **"LEFT** at the moon," said Santa, "then **RIGHT** at the big cloud, then straight on." Rudolph turned **RIGHT** at the moon. "Your other **RIGHT!"** called Santa. "That would be **LEFT,"** said Rudolph. **"RIGHT,"** said Santa. So Rudolph turned **RIGHT** again.

Now they were lost. Santa pulled out his map and turned it **LEFT,** then **RIGHT,** then upside down. "We should have **LEFT** earlier," he muttered. "We **LEFT RIGHT** on time," said Rudolph. "You just read the map wrong." "I did not," said Santa. "I am always **RIGHT."** Nobody said anything. There was nothing **LEFT** to say.

At the first house, Santa slid down the chimney and landed on his **LEFT** foot. The tree was on the **RIGHT,** the stockings were on the **LEFT,** and a plate of cookies sat **RIGHT** in the middle. He filled the **LEFT** stocking. He filled the **RIGHT** stocking. He ate every cookie until not a crumb was **LEFT,** which did not feel quite **RIGHT,** so he **LEFT** a thank-you note.

Back on the roof, his sack felt light. "How many gifts are **LEFT?"** asked Rudolph. Santa looked in. "Plenty **LEFT,"** he said, "but my **LEFT** boot is still in that chimney." He went **RIGHT** back down, found the boot **RIGHT** where he **LEFT** it, and climbed out with soot on his **RIGHT** ear.

By sunrise every gift was delivered and only one thing was **LEFT** to do. Santa flew **RIGHT** home, hung up his hat and said, "Next year, Rudolph, you hold the map." **"RIGHT,"** said Rudolph. And he was **RIGHT.** Merry Christmas!

For the reader

LEFT 17 times, RIGHT 19 times, 36 passes in all. Each gift ends up 2 seats to the right.

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