

Word Wonder Magnets

Players: two or more

Needed to play: an assortment of word magnets, or a Magnetic Poetry kit, and a cookie sheet or other metal surface

Age range: though young children can certainly take part in this collaborative game, players should have a developed vocabulary and some fluency skill. (Grades 4 and up)

How to Play: Word Wonder Magnets are meant to encourage idea sharing, vocabulary development, and creative play. This is why it rarely matters what actual words are in the Word Wonder kit, as what players are expected to do is express themselves differently by selecting a word that is there rather than by opting for one that they would normally choose. However, it is important to have a variety of word choices, including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, and prepositions.

Spread the words out on a shared surface, flipping up the magnets so that they are all visible. Magnets do not need to be arranged or placed in any particular order. Explain that punctuation and sentence structures are “suspended until further notice.”

Encourage one of the players to select a two or three word phrase from the magnets. It can be whatever he/she chooses, and can be as fanciful as he/she likes. Place the phrase at the top of the cookie sheet surface. This is the start of the game.

Player two can now build on that phrase. He/she can add another descriptive term, can develop a new phrase underneath, or can even change the words around.

Encourage both players to adapt and edit as ideas begin to flow. Tiles can be moved, replaced, or added to new phrases. Players should explore all their magnetic options as they work together building their word masterpiece. The result can be a poem, a story, a rant, a letter, a song, a lyric or even just a collection of words. The key is the collaborative process, the sharing of visions and ideas, and the choice among the words already present.

Making the magnets:

Strips of magnet can be purchased at department or dollar stores, though this magnet is thicker and can curl. Magnetic Poetry Kits are also still available for sale, though they are expensive and harder to find. But, if you want to make larger size words on cardboard or boxboard, magnet strips can do the trick. You can also develop sheets of words in any word processing program, using different

fonts or colours, and then print them on magnetic sheets that are printer-compatible and easy to customize. (These are available in the specialty paper section of office supply stores.)

For larger, very kid-friendly words:

- collect different words from newspaper headlines, magazine articles, or even from a young writer's work. Cut the words out and glue each onto a piece of cardboard. Allow to dry.
- trim the extra cardboard from around each word, so that every word is in its own separate square. Then, cut a piece of magnet strip and glue to the back of the cardboard.
- cover the word AND the magnet with mactac on both sides, to keep the edges of the words from curling up and to keep the magnet backing from peeling off.
- similarly, print a variety of words on cardstock, cut into squares, attach magnets to the back, and cover in plastic;
- words can be used to leave messages for others on a magnetic surface, to write poems or short stories, or to just play.