

OH Cards Quick-Start Guide

OH Cards are a genre of metaphoric associative cards. This handy guide introduces you to the OH Cards genre, offers a few OH Card activities, and provides links to additional resources. Please feel free to share it with friends, clients, and colleagues, in print or digital format – with all four pages included in full.

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OH Genre Basics

The term **OH Cards** refers to both the genre and a specific deck of cards within the genre. The genre includes all the different OH decks. **OH** is also the name of the very first deck in the genre, often called **original OH**, to distinguish it from other cards in the genre.

OH Cards look like a simple game, but in truth they're a many-faceted cross between a game and an ever-changing book. They stimulate creativity and communication. They're a tool and a springboard for the imagination, suitable for adults and children of all ages for a wide variety of uses, from therapy to art creation, family play, and corporate team training.

OH can be used as a co-creative, cooperative activity designed to enhance communication, encourage expression, and stimulate

imagination through a variety of interpretations. OH stretches our capacity to listen and to respond, to really hear each other without judgment or competitiveness. OH is a way for people to exchange feelings, fantasies, and ideas within a framework that protects privacy and vulnerability. In a round of OH, everyone wins.

Each deck can be used on its own or in conjunction with any (or all) of the other decks. Unlimited variations are possible. Easy-to-follow instructions for play and work are included with every deck.



ECCO

The OH Cards are not a soothsayer's prop. There's a temptation to "ask the cards a question." We prefer to believe that the answers to our problems lie within ourselves, within our own perceptions and interpretations. Fundamentally, OH Cards are about our subjective sovereignty, where nobody can tell us how to feel, how to interpret our perceptions, or how to decide who we are. We do that for ourselves.

Decks can be used in many ways, not restricted to the variations offered in the inserts, in books about OH, or on the OH websites. It's up to OH Card users to decide what form their activity will take.

There are currently 18 different OH Card decks and two books about OH. The original OH deck is available in 22 different languages.

OH Etiquette

There are no set rules that must be followed when using metaphoric cards. The guidelines recommended below foster the development of an atmosphere of trust. Ely Raman, the creator of the original OH cards said, “When these guidelines were experimentally set aside during the test-phase of OH, the spirit of love and communication and the feelings of trust and acceptance quickly vanished.”

In OH, we honour each other’s privacy.

- I may choose to pass, to not play the cards I have drawn.
- I can do this with or without explanation, revealing my cards or not.

In OH, we honour each other.

- I will not interrupt you.

In OH, we honour each other’s intelligence and imagination.

- I do not re-interpret (or interpret) your cards.

In OH, we honour each other’s integrity.

- I do not contradict you or argue about your interpretations.
- I try to remember that there are no “correct” interpretations of the pictures, no misreading of words.

In OH, we honour each other’s individuality.

- When I interpret my OH Cards I do not assume that you see what I see, feel what I feel, read what I read.

Activities Using the Original OH Deck

The original OH consists of two decks, each with 88 cards: one of miniature watercolours that refer to aspects of our daily lives and one with words that provide a backdrop for the paintings. There are 7744 combinations of words and images possible. Viewed one per day, it would take over 21 years to view all possible combinations.

In combining word and picture, the original OH Cards address the whole person by stimulating both the left and the right brain. The

OH Cards are not meant to be interpreted literally. The essential spirit of a picture placed on a word is an interpretation of intuition and the feeling it evokes. Interpretations may be contradictory, paradoxical, or ambiguous.



ROUND-UP (For 2-12 people)

Round-Up is a good warm-up for OH. It’s a silent form of visual art, with no explanations, comments, or responses. Place 8 or more word cards face up in the center of the group. The first person picks a picture card and places it face up on the word card that seems to make the most appropriate combination. Each person, in turn, places that same picture on any of the 8 word cards to make a combination. The same word card may be used by

different people. Once everyone has used the picture, a new picture card is drawn and used in the same way.

Round-Up Variations

The picture card can be used as a “bridge” between two or more words, thereby making a more comprehensive statement. Another variation is to make a brief statement when playing a card, related directly to the combination. In another variation, after each round there are brief questions and answers about the criteria used to play a card. It doesn’t matter if a discussion develops and the cards are forgotten. In a round of OH, the journey is the goal. Round-Up shows how OH Cards can be catalysts for generating mutual understanding.

MOSAIC

Place one picture card on a piece of blank paper. If that painting were only a part of, a detail of, a larger picture, what would the complete picture look like? What's happening outside the edges of the picture? How does the painting continue beyond the limits of the card?

Younger children enjoy this variation since it doesn't require a wide vocabulary. Instead of describing the cards, they can simply elaborate on the picture by drawing beyond it with crayons.

Activities Using Any OH Deck

OH STORIES (For groups)

OH Stories is a simple way to become familiar with the cards. (If using the original OH deck, at first use only use the picture cards.)

- Shuffle the cards and place them face down.
- The first participant chooses a card, turns it face up, and makes a simple statement about it (for example, for a picture of a spade leaning against the wall of a house: "I go into the garden to dig up the flower bed"). Use only one sentence – no more!
- The next participant draws a card, places it face up next to the previous participant's card, and makes a simple statement that's no more than one sentence and that's related to what the first participant said (for example, for a picture of a laden donkey: "... to work two bags of manure into the soil").
- The next participants follow in the same way, going around and back again until all the cards have been used.
- Before starting a round, you can agree on a story title or theme.

All the sentences will add up to a story – a strange and often hilarious one. Perception and fantasy combine to erase boundaries,

the voices of the participants become familiar, and the flavour of different imaginations creates a special and convivial potluck experience.

Tips and warnings

Don't think too much. Use the first phrase that comes to mind. Make your statements personal, using the words "I," "my," or "me." Keep statements in the present tense.

OH Stories Variation

Do the same process with the original OH word cards included, or with word and picture cards (from any deck) combined. If using word and picture cards combined, say something that contains the word itself, the sense of the word, or the opposite of the word.

PROBLEM – SOLUTION

Participants receive or take 5 cards, which they examine in private. The first person lays one card face up on the table, describing briefly a problem portrayed by that image. Any other participant may offer a card and an explanation as to how it points to a possible solution to that problem. This card is laid down next to the first one.

The person who offered the card to the first participant now addresses a new problem by laying down a card and describing it briefly. A solution may be offered, as before, by any other participant with any other card. This continues until all cards in the hand have been played. It is important that all participants have the opportunity to address both problems and solutions.

This activity will obviously lead to differences of opinion and to discussion, for in problem-solving there is usually more than one option. In the process of discussion the cards may be forgotten. At the conclusion of the discussion, participants may ask themselves, "What have I learned? How did I contribute?"

