

The Parkers Are Late Again

HOW TO PLAY

1. Everyone sits or stands in a circle holding one wrapped gift.
2. One person reads the story out loud, at an easy pace.
3. Every time you hear **LEFT**, pass your gift to the person on your left. Every time you hear **RIGHT**, pass it to your right.
4. When the story ends, open the gift in your hands. It's yours.

It was the night of the big holiday party, and the Parker family was late. Again. Aunt June's party started at six, and at a quarter to six Dad was still hopping down the hallway in his **RIGHT** boot, shouting, "Has anyone seen my **LEFT** boot?"

"It's **RIGHT** by the door!" Mom called. She had the car keys in one hand and a tray of cookies in the other. Grandpa had been waiting in the back seat on the **LEFT** for twenty minutes. He likes to be early, and he likes everyone to know it.

At last, everyone piled in. Mom backed out of the driveway and turned **LEFT** onto Maple Street. "No, no, no," said Grandpa. "Aunt June lives to the **RIGHT**!" So Mom turned **RIGHT** at the next corner, then **RIGHT** again, and soon they were back where they started, waving at their own house. "This time, go **LEFT**," said Grandpa, as if it had been her idea.

"Let's use the phone," said Lily, the oldest. The phone said, "In 500 feet, turn **LEFT**." Then it said, "Turn **RIGHT**." Then it said, "Recalculating." Dad trusted the phone. Grandpa said the phone had never been to Aunt June's. The dog said nothing, but he looked worried.

At a gas station, Mom asked a man in a reindeer sweater for directions. "Easy," he said. "Go **LEFT** at the giant inflatable snowman, then **RIGHT** at the house with way too many lights. You can't miss it." They found the snowman **RIGHT** away, on the **LEFT**, about the size of a garage. Sadly, every house on that street had way too many lights.

"Which one?" asked Dad. "**LEFT**!" said Lily. "**RIGHT**!" said her little brother Max, who always says the opposite of Lily. "**LEFT**," said the phone, very quietly. Mom turned **LEFT**, because she was driving.

And there it was: a wreath on the door and music in the windows. Then Mom froze. "The cookies," she said. "I **LEFT** the cookies on the roof of the car." They turned around. The cookies were still up there, on the **LEFT** side of the roof, a little cold but perfectly fine. Grandpa called it the best part of the night.

Inside, Aunt June hugged everyone and said, "You're **RIGHT** on time!" Nobody could believe it, until they saw the kitchen clock. It had been stuck at six o'clock for two years.

Then Dad looked down. He had his **RIGHT** boot on one foot and a fuzzy slipper on the other. His **LEFT** boot was still by the door at home. He decided nobody would notice.

Time for the very last pass. Everybody, pass your gift one more time to the **LEFT**. Keep the gift you're holding. Merry Christmas!

LEFT 14 times · RIGHT 11 times