

# Estate

A story game for 3+ Players by P. R. O'Leary

You are at an estate auction. A family's possessions are being sold. You will be collaboratively telling the story of that family through their possessions. Who were they? What was important to them? How did their estate come to an end?

## Setup

Gather your tools!

- A standard deck of playing cards, jokers removed
- Index cards, a sheet of paper, and writing implements
- About 12 tokens

Shuffle the deck of cards and put it face down in the center of the table.

Give every player an even amount of tokens so that the total number of tokens is as close to 12 as possible.

## Discuss

What family do you want to explore during this session? It's time to make up some things. Feel free to do this in whatever way your group likes, but at the end you must know three things:

- What type of family this story is about
- A description of the family's house and property
- The family's name

Do NOT define everything: The below should come up during gameplay and should not be defined during this discussion:

- Events in the family's timeline
- Members, friends and attachés of the family
- Family possessions

First, let's define "family" for the purposes of this game. A family is a group of people related in some way that have spent a large portion of their lives on the estate. They do not have to be related by blood. You can play this game with members of a commune, a cult, or a clan of vampires.

Once you choose your family, describe the family's house and property.

Is it an overgrown southern manor at the turn of the century? A cold, unforgiving castle in northern England in the 1400s? A New York City brownstone in modern day?

Next, think of a family name. Remember, don't name individual members! That will come out in play.

## Play

Gameplay takes place over several turns. Each round, someone is going to be the auctioneer. Everyone else will be buyers. The auctioneer role will rotate to the next player at the end of the round.

Here are the steps of each round.

1. The auctioneer draws a card to describe what item is up for auction
2. The buyers spend their tokens to add details about the item's history
3. Add the item to the family history or discard it
4. Pass the auctioneer role to the next player

Narratively, what you are doing is putting items from this estate up for sale. The buyers will determine the item's place in the family's story by spending tokens to add details. There is no "bidding" and "purchasing".

The auction is simply there to provide a framework for telling the story.

## The auctioneer draws a card to describe what item is up for action

The auctioneer draws a card and refers to the below chart. They then decide what item is up for auction based on the card and what they know of the family. Make it whatever you want, but be careful to only provide a physical description. Do not describe any personal details about the item. You can ignore the suit for now. That is for the buyers to use.

2-4	5-7	8-10	Jack	Queen	King	Ace
Small	Unique	Large	New	Beautiful	Old	Valuable

It helps to present it like an auctioneer. For the card *Five of Spades*:

"Up next is something very special. This comb is carved from a wooly mammoth tusk. The only one of its kind and in perfect condition."

## The buyers spend their tokens to add details to the item's history

Up until now, the item has no connection to the family. The players just know what it is and what it looks like. It might not be important to the story you are trying to tell. But then again, maybe it is! That's where the tokens come in.

If a buyer believes the item is important they spend a token and say "I heard about this!"

Then they add a detail about why. At this point you can create family members, events and relationships. Anything at all. Keep it short and adhere to the a tone based on the card the auctioneer drew:

♥ Hearts	♦ Diamonds	♣ Clubs	♠ Spades
Caring	Fortunate	Violent	Dark

"I heard about this! It was the comb Lord Utsugi bought for Lady Wentworth as a birthday gift but never gave to her."

Every buyer, multiple times, can spend a token to add further details about the item. Continue until everyone stops.

"I heard about this, too! Sasha Wentworth, Lady Wentworth's daughter, stole it from Lord Utsugi and tried to sell it behind his back."

## Add the item to the family history or discard it

If no tokens were spent, then the item was not important. The round is over and there is no need to do anything else. Discard the playing card and move on to the next auctioneer.

If tokens were spent, add the playing card to a central pile. Also, spend a moment to write down the item on an index card, as well as a few lines about why it is important. Keep it in the center of the table for everyone to reference in future rounds. It also might be helpful to have a paper where you keep notes about family members.

Repeat until no one has tokens.

## Pass the auctioneer role to the next player

Repeat the process. As the game goes on there will be more back-story for the buyers to draw upon. Eventually, everyone will run out of tokens. This signals the end of regular play.

## Epilogue

Look through the central pile of playing cards that was created when people found an item important. Which suit is most prevalent? If tied, choose one. The tone of the epilogue is determined by this suit.

Go around the table starting with the last auctioneer. Everyone tells one detail about the end of this family's story. The detail should be small but noteworthy. Use it to try to fill in blanks between events in the story you created, or to create closure for hanging plot threads. Continue until everyone has added one detail. Then the game is over.