

The Build-a-Word Card Game: Better than Go Fish!

A compound word is a long word that is made up of two smaller words—think “bookcase,” for example, or “playground.” Compound words may look hard at first, but things get easier if kids can spot two smaller words that they already know. Want to add a little “holy moly!” to something that can feel “ho hum?” This card game will help you practice making compound words—and have some fun while you’re at it!



What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pencils, markers, crayons or a combination of writing utensils

What You Do:

1. **Make a set of “word cards.”** Give your child the following list of words: life time can not cross walk moon light any body mean back ground bath room break fast day dream down town up stairs some butter fly fire thing one else where base ball day up side no air plane bed time
2. **Set it up.** Ask your child to write each word on its own index card. Then have her lay the cards in a pile, word down, and shuffle the deck. Each player gets 5 cards. The rest of the pile goes in the middle.
3. The object of the game: Collect as many compound words as possible, by finding “pairs” of cards that go together to form a word. The player with the most pairs at the end, wins.
4. Starting with the youngest player, each player looks at his hand and asks another player for cards. For example, if a player had the word “any” in his hand, he might ask, “Jason, do you have cards that go with “any?” If the other player has any words that can be attached to “any” (for example, “body”, “day”, “where”, or “time”) to make a compound word, he hands them over.
5. If a player gets the card(s) he asks for, it’s still his turn. He can ask for something else, for example, “Mom, do you have any cards that go with “cross?” But if a player asks for a card that his opponent doesn’t have, he’s told, “Go Build!” He must pick up the top card in the middle pile. If it’s something he can make a compound word with, using one of the cards in his hand, he shows the pair and his turn goes on. Otherwise, his turn ends.
6. Play continues like this. Each time a player find a compound word match, he shows the other players, then lays it beside him in a pile. Whoever had the most compound word pairs in the end, wins.
7. Want to check your work? There are many possible answers, but here are some words that were originally used for the list above: lifetime cannot crosswalk moonlight anybody meantime somebody butterfly firefly something someone elsewhere baseball today upside nowhere background breakfast daybreak daydream downtown upstairs bedtime airplane
8. Of course, there are thousands of compound words in the English language. So don’t limit yourself to this list! Brainstorm as many as you’d like to add to the deck. And let your kid in on the challenge!