

# The PACKARD PRESS

A collection of thoughts and stories to educate, entertain, and inspire.

## *Roll the Dice on Fun*

### WHY EVERY GAME IS A JOURNEY WORTH TAKING

In my gaming circles and family, they sometimes call me “Journey Boy.” When I sit down to play a game, I might not go with a winning strategy, but it’s certainly a strategy no one has tried before. “There’s Michael, going off on a little journey,” they’ll say as I embark on some extra fun, not so focused on winning as I am experiencing what the game allows for.

I’ve always loved playing games, and I’ve come to see that they not only provide enjoyment in the moment, but they also provide value in our everyday lives. Spending a few hours on a game is good for our brains and allow us to experiment and make mistakes in a safe environment where stakes are low. They can act as icebreakers in social situations, as a bonding agent among friends and family, or can even help grow skills. Game Day is Dec. 20, an excellent opportunity to celebrate the joy and benefits of playing games. Whether it’s a board game with your family, a video game with friends, or a lively round of cards during the holidays, games can bring us together for a meaningful shared experience.

When I was growing up, games were a regular part of my life. We would have Monopoly set up throughout the summer and play for hours before returning the next day for more. It could go on for weeks until, eventually, someone would bump it enough that it would end. We usually played Risk the same way, that is, until we discovered Axis and Allies. (It’s an even more advanced war game based on WW2 that was an all-day event.) In other words, I grew up understanding that when you play games, you play them for a very long time.

In college, I discovered social deduction games like Ultimate Werewolf and Mafia. In these types of games, there are typically two teams, but it’s up to the players to uncover which players are on which team. They are a lot of fun, and you can have up to 20 or so players at a time. I also love strategy games, such as Catan and Dominion.

Playing games keeps us in the moment, compared to the doom scrolling on our phones or mindless YouTube loops we can quickly get stuck in these days. Games help you socialize, and you can learn about the other players as you talk with them as you play. You can usually find a game that’s right for every occasion. Some games are whimsical and fun, designed to give us a break from the chaos and stress of life. Others are more serious and require more focus and provide exercise for your brain.



My favorite kinds of games have a few similar aspects. First, they end at the same time for everyone, instead of being single elimination. I never want anyone to sit out, watching while everyone else finishes up the game. (So, I usually don’t play Risk or Monopoly anymore.) Second, they have high replayability. If you “crack the code” on a game and find the single winning strategy, I lose interest in future sessions. Last, my favorite games hit that sweet spot between complexity and learnability. I like there to be enough strategy to keep it interesting, yet simple enough where my teenage kids can play.

I have discovered that I’m the biggest game player in my family and social circle. I’ve got so many board games now that I typically send my nieces and nephews home with one when they come to visit. That’s part of my strategy, too: sharing the joy of games and the connections they foster. Games are more than just an enjoyable way to pass the time. They create memories and opportunities to learn and bond with each other. They remind us that, like life, the journey is often more important than the destination. This Game Day, I hope you embrace your inner journey as you pull out a board game. You may not win, but you’ll surely have a good time.

*—Michael Packard*

# One Day at a Time

## A Legend Worth Its Weight in Bacon

### THE FASCINATING TALE OF THE PIG-FACED LADY

Ready for a tale that really brings home the bacon? Legends dating back to the 1700s tell the story of women who were a mix of beauty and beast — pig-faced ladies! Myths about noblewomen with hog heads lasted in France, Holland, and Britain for hundreds of years. These glamorous piglets were said to roam the city streets, take carriage rides through town, and show up at fancy parties or homes to beg for money. Let's ham it up royally and take a porky peek at the pig-faced ladies Londoners talked about for centuries.

One of the earliest tales starring a woman with a boarish face was in the 17th century. A pregnant Dutch housewife reportedly had a visit from a mysterious poor woman begging for money for her children. The housewife turned her away, and the cast-off beggar cursed her unborn child to be born with a pig's face. Stories that followed had similar themes of women cursed to look like pigs.

Our swine superstar was launched into legendary status in the summer of 1815 when Londoners were celebrating the recent victory of Britain over Napoleon and France. As people packed the streets, a horse-drawn carriage caught their attention. The passenger was none other than the pig-faced lady. Rumors and interest around the event spread, and London's growing newspaper industry took the story and ran with it.

In the following years, the masses sought proof of these pig-faced women. One woman put out an ad in the paper offering to provide care for a woman with the affliction. Another paper ran a request from a man with a marriage proposal for the elusive "baconess." The famous author Charles Dickens even referred to her in a book he wrote in 1861.

Chances are that people born with physical disabilities inspired the pig-faced lady story and reflected the sad way society treated them. The pig-faced lady likely represented London's biggest anxieties, like class tensions and women's limited roles.

So, whether she was the embodiment of society's fears or just a bit of hogwash, the tale of the pig-faced lady shows how the wildest legends can hog the spotlight for centuries.

## TIPS FOR BEING IN THE MOMENT THIS SEASON

The days may get shorter as the holidays approach, but each one can still be filled with meaning. It can be easy to get caught up in yesterday's regrets or tomorrow's worries and let time slip by. But you can accomplish so much if you take one day at a time and focus on being present. When we face every morning with the understanding that this is a new day, we can embrace it as a fresh start.

### Being in the Moment

Ultimately, living one day at a time means being present in the current moment. We often spend much of our energy thinking about past or future anxieties. While we can't forget the lessons we've learned, it's crucial not to allow the past to control us. The same is true for what's ahead — we must plan for the future but can't live there. It's about taking things moment by moment. To be present, we must acknowledge our thoughts and surroundings in the now, letting go of the past and future we can't change or control.

### Time Well Spent

Time can feel like it moves way too fast, especially this time of year when things get busy with the holidays and quickly transition back to regular schedules. Taking it one day at a time ensures we don't waste it. When you are in the moment, you can truly appreciate the small joys that make every day unique, like cooking together or taking a few quiet moments for yourself. Adopting this mantra can help you make more deliberate choices so more of your time can go to what matters most. You don't want to accidentally lose a day to mindless scrolling, but your day doesn't have to include a significant achievement to be a success. Spending time with the family, even to do "nothing," purposefully, without scrolling through phones, can be time well spent.

Every day is a chance to be fully present and connect meaningfully with loved ones. Life can feel overwhelming, so just remember to take it one day at a time and embrace the peace these intentional moments can bring.

—Michael Packard



# Level Up Family Fun

## Why Games Are the Ultimate Holiday Present

This holiday season, why not give your family the gift of creative outlets and mind boosters? Games make perfect presents, offering entertainment and opportunities to bond, laugh, socialize, and grow. Whether it's an expansion pack for your child's favorite game or a board game everyone can participate in, games are an excellent tool for connecting and exploring our imaginations. Get ready to roll the dice and win the gifting game!

### Level Up

Games are more than just fun. They can play an important role in childhood development and grow our skills as adults. When we play together as a family, it helps us bond and strengthens our communication. Rolling the dice or shuffling cards can improve children's motor skills and help them develop problem-solving capabilities. Playing games can positively impact our academics, physical health, and mental well-being.

### Game On

You can play many types of games with your family, including board games, virtual games, card games, or active games like sports or tag. Adding a physical element to your play can encourage and support healthy lifestyles in your family and make exercise fun. Board and card games can help your children learn teamwork, patience, and strategy. You can gain the same togetherness through virtual games like jackbox.tv, which allows multiple players to participate in party games from their devices. You can play some of your favorite classic board games online, so you don't have to worry about keeping track of game pieces or scores.

### Play Your Cards Right

When picking out a game as a gift, consider what the recipient is passionate about or their favorite genres. If you know they love a certain genre of games, look for another tabletop game of the same type they haven't tried yet. Many games also offer extensions, upgrades, or modifications you



can purchase for someone who is a big fan of a particular game.

This holiday season is the perfect time to make game night a new family tradition. In our busy lives, games are a way to relax, have fun, and connect with people more deeply. Not only is it fun, but playing teaches us and makes us stronger. This year, let the games unite the family in a way that makes everyone feel like a winner!

*—Michael Packard*

## TAKE A BREAK

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T	A	E	G	N	W	C	S	X	P	W	Q	R	N	A
N	V	N	U	E	M	L	S	M	M	K	N	P	Q	W
I	V	E	I	R	S	A	D	K	D	B	S	Y	P	P
M	S	R	J	D	N	C	Q	L	I	E	T	K	K	T
R	M	O	A	C	R	N	J	M	N	S	D	V	V	R
E	Y	S	O	W	U	A	E	O	O	X	I	P	L	L
P	Y	I	C	Y	Z	N	C	R	I	U	R	H	T	M
P	U	T	O	U	O	E	F	G	A	R	L	A	N	D
E	L	Y	C	R	N	Z	Q	T	A	E	A	P	H	F
P	E	O	A	I	D	I	L	D	B	S	H	I	K	F
D	R	H	P	B	M	O	T	R	B	W	Y	I	M	U
Q	Z	D	V	M	A	E	X	Y	D	J	V	X	U	X
O	D	K	E	X	V	E	M	V	O	W	E	C	E	H
S	N	U	G	G	L	E	Y	Q	P	I	Y	M	S	B

Cardinal  
Cocoa  
Frosty  
Garland

Generosity  
Menorah  
Mittens  
Peppermint

Pinecones  
Snuggle  
Unity  
Yule



## CHICKEN CAPRESE SALAD

*Inspired by EatingWell.com*

### Ingredients

- 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp ground pepper
- 2 1/2 tsp honey
- 3/4 tsp salt, divided
- 1/2 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 2 (8-oz) boneless, skinless chicken breasts, sliced
- 8 cups coarsely chopped romaine lettuce
- 1 lb grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 (8-oz) container fresh small mozzarella cheese balls in water, drained
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves

### Directions

1. Whisk vinegar, olive oil, mustard, and pepper in a medium bowl. Transfer 6 tbsp of mixture to a smaller bowl and whisk in honey; set aside.
2. To mixture in the medium bowl, add 1/2 tsp salt, Italian seasoning, and garlic powder. Add chicken; toss to coat. Marinate for 30 minutes.
3. Coat a grill pan with oil. Over medium heat, add chicken and cook until grill marks appear on each side, about 5–7 minutes. Transfer to a plate; let stand for 5 minutes.
4. Arrange romaine, tomatoes, mozzarella, and basil on a large platter; sprinkle with salt. Top with the sliced chicken and drizzle with the honey mixture.

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1100 NW Loop 410, Ste 100  
San Antonio, TX 78213  
210-340-8877 | PackardFirm.com/newsletter

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# DECLUTTER YOUR LIFE

## HOW TO BECOME A TIDIER PERSON

If the top of your desk looks like a photo op for an "I Spy" book, chances are you could benefit from tidying up. It isn't easy saying goodbye to your familiar clutter, but it's for the better. A messy environment can be stressful and frustrating, as it makes finding anything more difficult and worsens the overall attractiveness of your home. While change can be challenging, it is worth the effort for your home and health.

### First Thing's First

Growing up, your mom probably reminded you to make your bed. There is a good reason to prioritize that first thing in the morning, as it helps set an intention to accomplish the little things and get your day off to a more productive start. It also contributes to better sleep hygiene; a cluttered bedroom and undone bed could be hindering your sleep. So, eliminating potential distractions, including an unmade bed, could enhance your sleep.



### Clean Slate

Keeping a clean home can help you be more physically fit. According to a study by Indiana University, a tidier living space contributes to higher levels of physical activity. Keeping things clean means keeping active, and even if you don't exercise for 30 minutes daily, 30 minutes of vacuuming or any kind of scrubbing is still a great way to keep yourself moving.

### Daily Declutter

While tidying up the home may seem daunting at first, it can be much easier if you break it down into smaller tasks. Doing a bit of laundry every other day helps prevent you from having to do a massive load later. Picking up around the kitchen when you get a snack or cook a meal can prevent that space from looking like a scene out of "Kitchen Nightmares." Wherever you go in your home, if you pick up a thing or two cluttering the area and put it away, you are well on your way to becoming a neater person.