The Time Traveller's Tow Truck

by Don Kirkby

Guide your rescuers to find you in time.
Number of players: 2 or more
Equipment: 3 dice, paper and pen for keeping score

The story

Your time machine broke down, and your team is coming to rescue you in a time-travelling tow truck. In this game, you and your teammates take turns as stranded time agents guiding the rest of the team to rescue them from the past. After five rescues, whichever team spent the least time trapped in the past wins the game.

Trapped in the past

Luckily, your time machine is not completely broken - it can still drift forward toward the present. During recent history, it takes a month to drift one year forward. The farther back in the past you are, the faster you drift forward. The big table at the end of these rules shows how many months it would take to drift forward from any year to the year 2001, when your time machine was built in a secret lab. Your time machine can travel as far back as 2000 BCE, and it would take you 18 years to drift back to the present from there. Hopefully, you can guide your rescuers closer to you in time, so you won't have to wait that long.
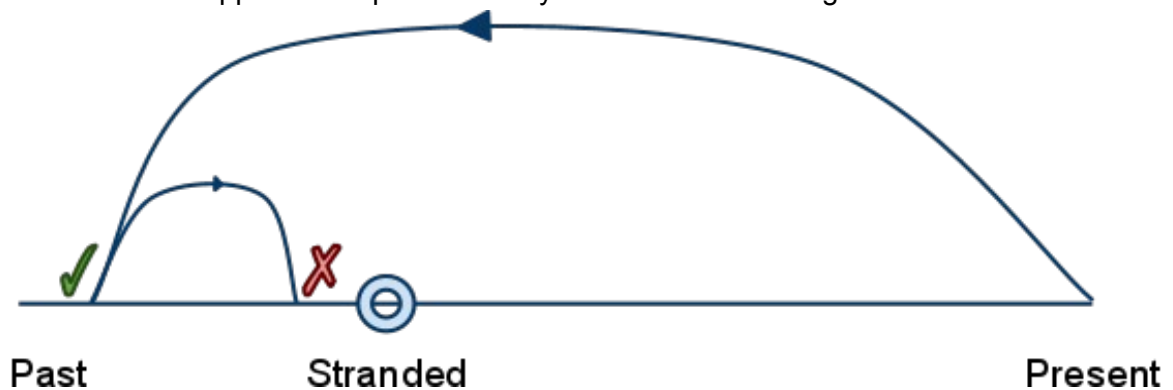
Hopping through time

As you know, time travel is tricky. One wrong move, and the world is ruled by mutant ants! In order to avoid such mishaps, you must communicate with your rescuers using strict protocols. All time agents bring an entangled quantum communicator with them from the present that can send one message to the rescuers. Unfortunately, just telling the rescuers what year you are in would cause a catastrophic paradox. However, you can describe current events so the rescuers can work out when you are stranded.
If the rescuers jump, but they miss you by a few years, you may be able to send them another message. It depends on whether they hopped over your position on the time line and re-entangled the quantum communicators. Every time they hop over your position, you can send another message describing a current event to try and bring them closer to you. In fact, if they are jumping from far in your future, you can describe an event from a few years in your past just to make sure they pass over you. If they are jumping from far in your past, you can describe an event from a few years in your future. There's no limit to the number of hops, but it takes one month to recharge the tow truck for each jump.
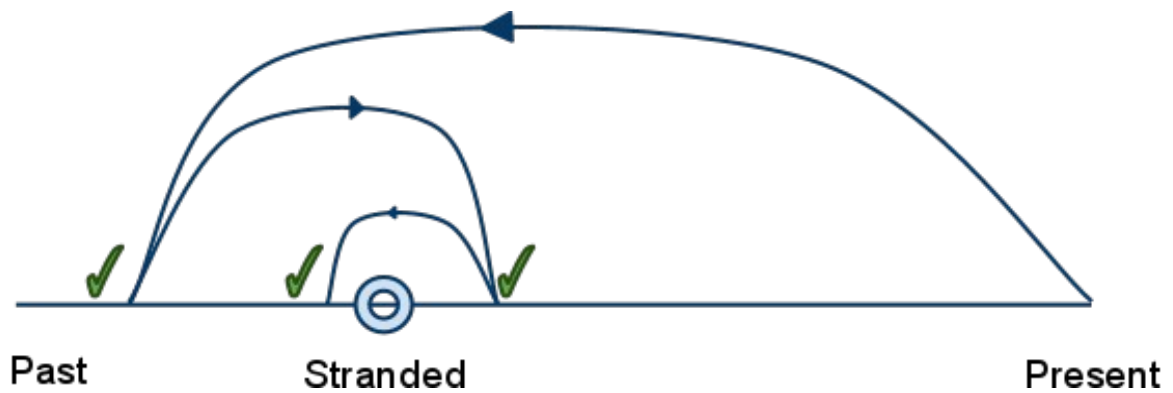
In the diagram above, the rescuers made three jumps, and each time they passed over the stranded agent so they could continue to communicate. In the diagram below, the rescuers' second jump did not pass over the stranded agent, so they cannot communicate and must spend a few months trapped in the past until they drift forward to the agent's time.

Meeting your rescuers

When the rescuers stop jumping, whichever group is earlier drifts forward through time until they reach the others. See the table to calculate how many months it takes to drift. Find the two years in the table, and subtract the two drift times to get the drift time between them. If a year you need isn't in the table, use the next year that is in the table. For example, if the rescuers stop in 1400, the next year that appears in the table is 1407. If you're stuck in 1452, then it takes two months for them to drift to you.

To start

With four or more players, divide into two teams with at least two players on each team. Teams can have different numbers of players. On each turn, one team will choose an agent to be rescued from the past. When both teams have performed five rescues, the team with the lowest total score wins. In case of a tie, the team with the lowest score for a single rescue wins.
With three players, each player rescues each of the other players once. Keep track of each player's score separately and add the time for each rescue to the score for the two participating players. The player with the lowest total score after all six rescues wins.

With two players, take turns rescuing each other. After each player has been rescued five times, add up the total score for all ten rescues. 50 or less is an expert score, 100 or less is good, and more than 100 means you need to review some world history.

How to play

On each turn, choose a player to be the agent. The agent rolls the three dice and reads the three numbers from left to right, then finds those numbers in the roll column of the drift table at the end of these rules. The agent is now stranded in the year next to that roll, so they write down the year on the score sheet, show it to the other team, and then hide it. The rescuers should look away while the agent rolls the dice and finds the target year.
Now the agent describes an event from some time near the target year, the rescuers discuss when they think it happened, and then they tell the agent what year they're jumping to. This repeats as long as they keep passing over the agent and the agent wants to keep them jumping.

Example

Alice is the time agent and rolls 4-5-6 on the dice. Shee looks in the table and finds roll 456 is in the year 1811. As much as she would like to say, "The war of 1812," she knows that saying a year would cause a paradox. She says, "The American declaration of independence is signed." Bob and Charles are the rescuers and they say 1776 after discussing it. Since they passed over Alice, she can give another clue and says, "Jane Austen publishes *Emma*." They don't really know when it was published (1816, in case you're curious), but they guess 1850. Now Alice says, "Napoleon is banished to Elba." Again, they're not really sure, but they guess 1800. At that point, Alice decides to stop the jumping. She looks in the table to see that it's a two-month drift between 1800 and 1811. The team spent three months jumping and two months drifting, so they add five to their score.

Drift Table

roll	year	wait	roll	year	wait	roll	year	wait	roll	year	wait
666	2000BCE	216	536	1609	162	366	1893	108	236	1947	54
665	1816BCE	215	535	1623	161	365	1894	107	235	1948	53
664	1640BCE	214	534	1636	160	364	1895	106	234	1949	52
663	1473BCE	213	533	1648	159	363	1896	105	233	1950	51
662	1314BCE	212	532	1660	158	362	1897	104	232	1951	50
661	1162BCE	211	531	1671	157	361	1898	103	231	1952	49
656	1017BCE	210	526	1682	156	356	1899	102	226	1953	48
655	879BCE	209	525	1692	155	355	1900	101	225	1954	47
654	748BCE	208	524	1702	154	354	1901	100	224	1955	46
653	623BCE	207	523	1711	153	353	1902	99	223	1956	45
652	504BCE	206	522	1720	152	352	1903	98	222	1957	44
651	391BCE	205	521	1729	151	351	1904	97	221	1958	43
646	283BCE	204	516	1737	150	346	1905	96	216	1959	42
645	180BCE	203	515	1745	149	345	1906	95	215	1960	41
644	82BCE	202	514	1752	148	344	1907	94	214	1961	40
643	12	201	513	1759	147	343	1908	93	213	1962	39
642	101	200	512	1766	146	342	1909	92	212	1963	38
641	186	199	511	1773	145	341	1910	91	211	1964	37
636	267	198	466	1779	144	336	1911	90	166	1965	36
635	344	197	465	1785	143	335	1912	89	165	1966	35
634	417	196	464	1791	142	334	1913	88	164	1967	34
633	487	195	463	1796	141	333	1914	87	163	1968	33
632	553	194	462	1801	140	332	1915	86	162	1969	32
631	616	193	461	1806	139	331	1916	85	161	1970	31
626	676	192	456	1811	138	326	1917	84	156	1971	30
625	733	191	455	1816	137	325	1918	83	155	1972	29
624	788	190	454	1820	136	324	1919	82	154	1973	28
623	840	189	453	1824	135	323	1920	81	153	1974	27
622	890	188	452	1828	134	322	1921	80	152	1975	26
621	937	187	451	1832	133	321	1922	79	151	1976	25
616	982	186	446	1836	132	316	1923	78	146	1977	24
615	1025	185	445	1840	131	315	1924	77	145	1978	23
614	1066	184	444	1843	130	314	1925	76	144	1979	22
613	1105	183	443	1846	129	313	1926	75	143	1980	21
612	1142	182	442	1849	128	312	1927	74	142	1981	20
611	1177	181	441	1852	127	311	1928	73	141	1982	19
566	1211	180	436	1855	126	266	1929	72	136	1983	18
565	1243	179	435	1858	125	265	1930	71	135	1984	17
564	1274	178	434	1861	124	264	1931	70	134	1985	16
563	1303	177	433	1864	123	263	1932	69	133	1986	15
562	1331	176	432	1866	122	262	1933	68	132	1987	14
561	1358	175	431	1868	121	261	1934	67	131	1988	13
556	1383	174	426	1870	120	256	1935	66	126	1989	12
555	1407	173	425	1872	119	255	1936	65	125	1990	11
554	1430	172	424	1874	118	254	1937	64	124	1991	10
553	1452	171	423	1876	117	253	1938	63	123	1992	9
552	1473	170	422	1878	116	252	1939	62	122	1993	8
551	1493	169	421	1880	115	251	1940	61	121	1994	7
546	1512	168	416	1882	114	246	1941	60	116	1995	6
545	1530	167	415	1884	113	245	1942	59	115	1996	5
544	1547	166	414	1886	112	244	1943	58	114	1997	4
543	1564	165	413	1888	111	243	1944	57	113	1998	3
542	1580	164	412	1890	110	242	1945	56	112	1999	2
541	1595	163	411	1892	109	241	1946	55	111	2000	1