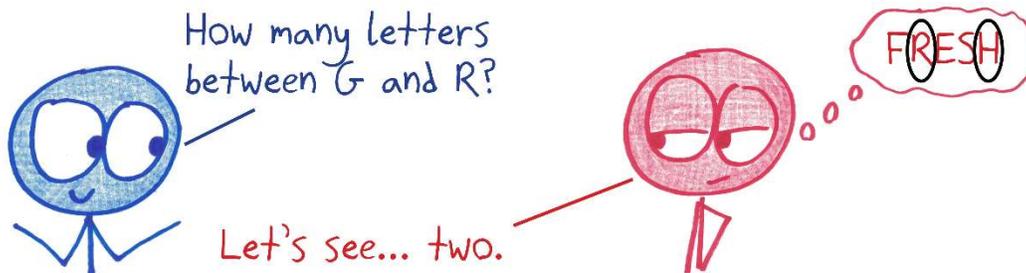


Poe

A Game of Alphabetical Order

“The alphabet is a remarkably versatile device for playing games,” Sid Sackson writes in *Beyond Games*. His word game Poe is all the proof I need: it’s an information-gathering game that hinges crucially on the order of the alphabet.

To begin, each player picks a **secret five-letter word**. All five letters must be different. Then, take turns asking each other questions of the form: “**How many of your letters are between G and R?**” In your question, pick any two letters you like. I suggest counting the end letters as included, so B counts as “between” B and D.¹



When you’re ready, announce, “**I’m going to guess your word.**” Your opponent may then **decide whether or not to make a guess, too**. If only one player is right, they win. If one player declines to guess, and the other guesses wrong, then the non-guesser wins. If both guess right or both guess wrong, the game is a tie.

Also, since the **game offers no way to tell anagrams apart**, accept any word with the right letters. For example, if your word is BLEAT, then TABLE is also correct.

¹ In Sid’s original version, he excludes the end letters. Also, the questions take different forms: in Round 1, you ask, “How many letters before ___?”; in Round 2, “How many letters between ___ and ___?”; and in Round 3, “How many letters after ___?” The cycle of questions then repeats.