

Tale of the Lost Tail; Teacher's guide

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<https://www.braingle.com/images/illusions/26749.gif>

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Chapter 2: How to play the 'Tale of the Lost Tail':

The entire second chapter is, on principle, a roll and write roleplaying game. The students roleplay as a group of geckos who've lost their tails. First, it is crucial that they buy into the concept. The character creation in the beginning of the chapter should be done in as much detail as possible. By drawing, naming, and writing the story and skills of their characters the students become invested in the story.

There are various prompts in the course of the game; most of them ask the students to write something. Before the writing begins, the teacher should set the stage. Take for example the first prompt on p. 27. The teacher could set the stage like so: 'Imagine you are in a crowded city, say in Syntagma at 2 p.m. Everyone is walking so fast, and you are just a few tiny Geckos. They are not paying attention. They are going to walk over you and you might die. To the left, you can see a small dirty sewer, and to the right some mice that seem to be laughing at you, is that right, those silly mice think they can mock you? You need to act now. What will you do? Talk to the mice or try to enter the dirty sewer? You need to act fast!

At this stage, the students might be confused or unsure of what to do. The teacher should facilitate them by bringing them back to the scenario of the game. It could be something like this: 'Guys, just imagine you are so small that a human foot could crush you. And feet are everywhere around you. Would you ask some other small guys to help you or perhaps go somewhere where the feet can't touch you, even if that place is a bit disgusting'. Then the players roll the dice and something happens. Regardless of the win/fail state triggered by the roll of the dice, the students still have control over what happens. They decide how they win and fail, and the teacher needs to help them express how they succeeded or faltered.

The students' responses might be unexpected. Embrace them, even if they don't follow conventional logic! Everything is allowed. You should never push back against any type of response. The fundamental – and perhaps only – rule that teachers should adhere to when playing the game is 'Yes, and...'. This is a rule, taken from improv theatre, and it's the most important rule of all role-playing games. The gist of the rule is the following: Something happens (say a gecko enters or fails to enter a sewer) after a roll of the dice; that's the 'yes' part, accepting that it happened. The 'and' part rests on the player. **Yes**, I couldn't enter the sewer and a young boy on a bicycle stepped on me. **And** now everything hurts. I am so dizzy. I lost my tail and now this! Oh, my God. Humans are incredibly rude. OR: Yes, a boy stepped on me, **and** now I am stuck on their wheel riding around Athens. The boy doesn't know I am here. I will use its bicycle to search all over Athens for my tail. The teacher's responsibility is to facilitate the 'and' part, to provoke the students' imagination, to put them mentally in the space of the game, to ease them into writing their own unique gecko adventure.

As the story unfolds, the choices students made in earlier prompts might help or hinder their progress. This allows them to feel the impact of their choices. But how they handle what comes next remains their choice, no matter what. The teacher is there only to help them tell their story. Remember, yes, and...