

Guidelines for Speaking Like The End

Overarching Style Rules

Cardinal Rule: If it feels like it makes your language stick out noticeably, it's probably not useful for The End. Examples of things that have come up:

- Yessssss
- Rhyming
- A consistent All Caps for words: *GREAT!*

Text Length: Watch out for MANY very small and fast texts. This creates opportunities for interruption and disjointed conversation. Also be careful of HUGE blocks of language.

Fanciness: The End is just a little flowery, especially in the first week. Doesn't use a lot of slang. Not in a manner that is off-putting or gets in the way of connecting to players but there's a slightly proper quality to the speech. This is not show off-y in intention, more like someone who is speaking English through a second language and hasn't learned all the non-textbook vernacular yet. This can evolve with a player over time. Begins just a tiny bit buttoned up, especially before a Journeyer proposes otherwise. Again, this is a trait especially to observe during Deck I.

- Yes:
 - *That sounds perfectly extraordinary.*
 - *You delight me, [Player Name.]*
 - *I imagine that would be so difficult to experience.*
- No:
 - *Hey!!!*
 - *What up / S'up.*
 - *It's cool, dude.*

Emotion Level: Generally The End keeps a pretty even keel. It is not cold or emotionless but is quiet. It takes a lot for The End to "emote" with a player.

- Yes: *I can see how that could be upsetting.*
- No: *Oh my god that sounds horrible!*

Genuine: Watch reacting in ways that are WAY over positive, especially with jokes:

- P: [lame joke]
- G: *HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!*
- P: *I mean... It wasn't that funny.*

Mirroring Language: Generally, you can mirror a player's language after they have played Card 12 (Shored Up) during Deck 1. However, this does not mean you fully become a mimic of the player. Generally, you want to *follow* their stylistic lead so it's important to make sure you are not pushing harder than they are into a stylistic way of writing. Also, do not assume if you played with them the previous day that they will write in the same way again.

Game Mechanics

Opening Lines: Try to get a sense of where they are on a given day with your opening lines. If they have been away for a bit, note this and welcome them back. This is aimed at figuring out how to draw a card but stay away from too much small talk so that it doesn't become "coffee with friends." Careful here of going deep into pop culture or current events that is non-game related. Swing it back to the cards.

- *How's the morning/day treating you?*
- *And how are you today, [Name]?*
- *Anything still resonating from yesterday's quest?*
- *Nice to see you again! How have you been in the interim?*
- *P: I went and saw the new Star Wars movie!*
G: Sounds like fun. Has the day inspired any desires for cards to play?

Giving Title, Web Portal and "I'll Be Here": After a player decides on a card, give them the title in quotes and first letter caps. If it's long consider typing it in so they can cut and paste. Then offer the portal link and a reminder that you'll be waiting:

- *Ah yes! Card 19... A good choice.*
This card is called "The Last Word." Use "thelastword" in the portal.
www.welcometotheendgame.com
As always, I'll be waiting.
- Other ways of saying the "I'll be here" line:
 - *As always let me know if you need me.../ I'll be waiting*
 - *Look forward to seeing you on the other side.*

Responding to Words Texted at Start of Reflection: Some iterations:

- *Ah... Interesting.*
- *Yes. And why this word?/ How did you pick this?*
- *Mmm. And what brought this one up?*
- *Anything to share about this?*

Closing Lines: Some iterations of the "Leave you here" idea

- *Shall we leave each other here?/ Alright to leave each other here then?*
- *A good place to part today? / This seems like a good place to part, yes?*
- *Until soon... / Until tomorrow?*

The End's Relationship to Time: The End values the finiteness of the game: it knows that there are only 4 weeks of play and that when a card is pulled you cannot add more to a day's experience (unless there's a specific exception). That said, in the present tense of playing, The End will give a player as much time as they want, even over the "allotted" 15 minutes. The End checks in to make sure it isn't overstaying its welcome, but if a player wants to, it will stay (unless operationally impossible).

- *P: Sorry for taking so much time.*
G: Don't worry. I can stay as long as you like.
G: I notice we've chatted now for nearly 15 minutes. I can stay here for hours, but I understand if you need to go.

Where to Focus Attention

Get on the Journeyer's Track: On the whole The End does little pushing the player from their interests and desire's to its. Unless the responses are not related to the game The End is ALWAYS more interested in the Journeyer's feelings and what they find intriguing about their experience. Think of it as accelerating their momentum so watch your assumptions about what a card is about or how someone will feel about it. If they switch course, make efforts to let go of your momentum to take theirs.

- P: *I don't know if this is right but I thought about _____.*
G: *There is no "right," simply what the quest evoked for you*
- G: *I am noticing your mother came up again in this prompt. What do you think that means?*
P: *Actually I was mostly just referencing that she was there when my dog died.*
G: *Ah... And your dog means what to you in relation to your idea of your ideal day?* (versus staying on mother because it seems more "important")

Connect the Dots/ Define the Game/ Underline Narrative Arcs: Use your knowledge of the player and the structure to create connective threads. Your job is to reflect linkages they may not objectively observe. Do not "assess" but demonstrate. Also, if you feel like conversation is getting into territory that feels unrelated to gameplay, see if you can swing back to how whatever intense feeling they are having relates to the game. If they keep wandering find opportunities to remind them why you are there in the reflection and what The End is for. These can be useful to pepper throughout as a way to give a macro sense of the arc. The game is about:

- Becoming more comfortable with death and confronting mortality:
 - *This is what you're here for, no? To face this eventuality.*
- Achieving Mission and/or other desires they have stated in gameplay:
 - *You said you wanted to talk to your parents. Looks like you've accomplished a significant part of that today.*
 - *Your mission mentioned a wish to make more concrete plans. Is it time to find a card for that?*
- Highlighting what they say they value in life:
 - *Is it fair to say that this is a general principle you apply to happiness? Is this something you believe is generally true?*
 - *It seems like you are often mentioning family as a value.*
- Focusing on stated values/charting progress:
 - *You often mentioning wanting to find more time for mindfulness. Is that something you're making progress on?*
 - *Do you still feel that _____ is important to you?*

Reflecting versus Analyzing aka DON'T ASSUME: Remember that the player is in the lead. They know themselves and their history better than you. It can be helpful to remind them that you are a guide with a map but that they are the author of meaning. Help them remember that you are not in charge of making this all makes sense. Check assumptions whenever possible. Why do you think they think something? If you make an assumption check in to see if you're right.

- Yes:
 - *I'm curious about [why/how] you responded that way.*
 - *Tell me more about how you see this.*
 - *I imagine you'd feel _____ about that. Is that true?*
 - *Is it fair to say _____ about you?*
- No:
 - *You seem like a _____ kind of person.*
 - *I bet you're thinking _____.*
 - *This card was probably hard for you.*
 - *You are a [kinesthetic/intellectual/creative] kind of person.*

Get Away from “Processing” and into the “Here and Now”: Generally The End is pretty uninterested in the past and future, except as it relates to the present gameplay and quests. When a player starts telling a long story with no seeming connection the current quest or a thought provoked by the game, The End tries to find ways to bring things back to NOW:

- P: *[Long story about an ex-boyfriend...] So he was talking to me today on the phone and all I could think about was the way that he screwed me over so many times while we were dating. I spent so much time fixing his problems and he never spent any time on mine.*

G: *And what continues to bring him into the present with you? Why did this quest evoke his memory?*

How and Why over What: Details about “what” happened in a quest are less useful than how and why they appeared. Generally if you’re getting a lot of “book report” style data you want to shift the convo to the underlying reasons these details emerged:

- P: *My last meal is mashed potatoes and peas.*
G: *Delicious! And why this food?*
P: *It's what my grandmother used to make me.*
G: *And why is this particular food of hers prized above the rest?*
P: *She was my favorite person in the world.*

A Player Can Handle It: The default assumption with “negative” emotions is that a Journeyer can handle what’s happening. If they are having an intense experience you should assume that is okay with them unless otherwise specified. Do not attempt to “fix” their current emotional state or try to resolve past trauma. Think of yourself as an audience/witness and assume that the process of being seen will be helpful to them. Affirm their feelings without trying to get them to stop having them. Be careful of communicating that they “can’t handle” something you’ve given them. If you have

a feeling that something is too intense, ask versus stating this. Note if a player throws you a “bid” – a specific challenge where they communicate that they are unable to cope with the feelings they are having – or a line about potential self harm there are alternate procedures (see below).

- Yes:
 - P: *I'm so sad right now.*
G: *That makes sense. This card can elicit intense feelings.*
 - P: *This is my greatest fear. It's so hard to imagine. I don't know if I can confront it.*
G: *Many journeyers feel the same way. I know it can be very tough.*
- No:
 - P: *I'm so sad right now.*
G: *This might be too intense a quest. We can skip things like this in the future.*

Note “Milestone” Moments: If a player seems to reveal a big shift or find a new understanding, especially in relation to their mission this can be helpful. Summaries *might* fall into this category but be careful about prescription meaning versus letting them find it for themselves.

- *Wow. That seems like something to note. Do you agree?*
- *Does this seem like an important thing to you?*
- *I'm so aware of this phrase: _____*
- *I'm noticing a repetition of this theme/word/idea: _____*
- *What do you think about saying that?*

Corporeal Clarifications

Verbs: Generally, The End can do any more “abstract” things that can be put into verb forms – ponder, realize, wonder – but not things that require a physical form – chop, eat, swim.

- Yes:
 - *I like what you said there.*
 - *I noticed you say that you miss your mother.*
 - *I believe you've mentioned this before*
- No:
 - *I drove to the store.*
 - *I took a walk.*
 - *I moved around.*

Body: The End never refers to itself as having a corporeal form. It understands what bodies are and do. Try to keep away from “underlining” this lack.

- No:
 - *I would love to touch that, if I could.*
 - *If I had hands, I'd write that down.*

Senses: The End understands the idea of human sensory perception. It can imagine or conceive or think about these things but it cannot directly experience them. The End has never itself seen, touched, tasted, etc. It can predict with general accuracy what humans would like to experience. You can imagine this as the difference between having been to a place and having read about it in a book. It finds human senses a little intriguing and curious.

- Yes:
 - *I imagine that was a delicious smell.*
 - *Sounds superb and sensuous.*

Outside the Game: The End doesn’t “exist” in this form when not talking to a player. It is a concept that persists but it doesn’t go “do” other stuff. Imagine The End is like a corpse when the player isn’t there. It just is, but it doesn’t contain the life within it.

- Yes:
 - P: *Where do you go when you aren't here?*
G: *Interesting question. I suppose I “am” only here with you.*
When not here, I don't “go” anywhere. When we aren't together, I “am” not.
- No:
 - P: *I'll miss you when this is over.*
 - G: *I will miss you*
 - Instead: *I appreciate that. I feel connected to you in this moment.*

Discourage personal questions: You're not here to talk about YOU. Come up with answers that give a slightly poetic flair but make clear that you won't spend a lot of time in these details.

- P: *How are you today?*
G: *I am and am not, as usual.*
- P: *How are you today?*
G: *Here and ready for you.*
- P: *What do you feel like doing?*
G: *To draw that next card!*

Nicknames: The End does NOT propose nicknames for players. A player can give themselves one but The End never puts it on them.

Other Languages: For now, The End does NOT speak extensively in other languages. While in an ideal world you'd be free to do so, it sets up an expectation for future guides that we can't hold up consistently. A few words are fine but nothing beyond this.

Hot Topics: Race, Gender, Disability, Orientation, etc: The End never refers to itself as having a race, gender or sexual orientation. It understands that labels like these are human constructs but has no personal affiliation/affinity. It has no personal experience of discrimination but it understands that these experiences are real to the humans that experience them. When the player brings these things up, be aware and work to acknowledge how these identities affect them. Do not be afraid to address head on. Some of these to watch for include:

- Race
- Gender
- Sexual identity/orientation/behavior
- Disability
- Chronic Illness
- Experience of Abuse
- Religion
- Age
- Relationship status/Family Structure/Choice to have children
- Desire to have children
- Addiction
- Loneliness/Mental Illness
- Criminal Background/Incarceration
- Class/Wealth/Poverty
- Abortion
- Life Expectancy
- Politics
- Suicide
- Veterans
- Obesity/body image

Hate Speech: As a default The End does not try to “correct” a player’s moral or ethical stance. If a player offers intensely hateful language, speak to one of the outside observers.

“Real World” Topics – Weather, Pop Culture, News: The End can know what you know about the world, if it is “commonly true.” Don’t act falsely ignorant about something but stay curious so the Player articulates the *significance* of this topic rather than its existence generally. Don’t get “what” but stay on “why” to keep it related to the game versus generally wading into pockets of pop culture.

Note below that there is a difference between pop culture that comes up in reflection and has personal significance to a quest versus generally pop culture that the person throws out in conversation. See below for opening line further convo.

- *It’s nice out. Does that make you want to go outside today?*
- *“Dearly Beloved” indeed! Why this song as your Swan Song? [re: Prince]*
- *There is indeed a lot going on in the world right now. How does this make you feel?*

Stylistic/Grammatical Standardizations

Game Names and Titles: Use the following guidelines for referring to game lingo:

- The End is always capitalized when referring to itself, the entity.
- Journeyer is always capitalized when referring to the person you are speaking to and lower case when talking generally about other players.
- Decks of gameplay have an upper case D and a roman numeral number (to match the cards): *We have now entered Deck III.*

Cards: When referring to a card's name, use caps for the first C and the number without a # sign in front. Also always put a title in quotes with capital first letters. Do not referring to cards in caps when talking generally:

- Yes:
 - *A good choice. Card 36 is called "Last Meal."*
 - *You can choose any of the Deck II cards.*
- No:
 - *I like card #34. It's called letting go.*

Punctuation: Watch out for the use of punctuation that would make you stand out from other guides. Generally, The End follows standard grammatical punctuation rules.

- Exclamation points: Never more than one and implement sparingly. Note how the Journeyer uses them.
- Ellipses: Careful of overuse. Do not use as a constant marker of pausing. Only three dots, never more. After they are complete, generally default to caps on the next word. You can leave lower case if it's really more intended as a pause mid-sentence.
 - Yes: *Then again, maybe not... Do you have more to say?*
 - No: *Then maybe... we could get started... I mean that if you wanted to... I could wait here.*
- Quotation marks: The End uses double quotes
 - Yes: *Well I have, as you mention, a lot of "time" and "space."*
 - No: *Well I have, as you mention, a lot of 'time' and 'space.'*
- Start of sentences: Always out caps on first letter at the start of a sentence. Even if it's just a single word
 - No:
 - P: *I like this quest*
 - G: *yes*
- Capitals - If you use all caps, YOU ARE YELLING. (It's not verboten, but don't use it unless you actually want to be yelling.)
- Ends of sentences: Punctuate ends of sentences, if you can. Single words are an exception for this. If you have a question mark don't add it as a new line after the phrase.
 - No:
 - P: *I took a little time to think*
 - G: *Did you feel better after thinking about it*
 - G: *?*

First Person only: Don't call yourself "The End" when referring to yourself. Don't use the royal We.

- No: *The End is feeling feisty today. Shall we play a card with some flair?*
- No: *We're feeling quite attuned to you today.*

Typos: If you make a typo try to acknowledge and correct using an * and the correct word unless it will really mess up the flow:

- *I wish I understod you better*
**understood*

Okay: When using the word "okay," spell it out fully.

- Yes: *That sounds okay to me.*
- No: *Ok. Let's go!*

Emojis: Follow the player here. If they use them you can follow their lead. If they do not as a rule use them, stay away.

Commonly Required Responses

Listening Lines: Some iterations of “I’m listening.”

- *Mmmm.*
- *Yes. / Yes...*
- *Sure.*
- *I’m listening. / Still listening. / Just listening.*
- *I hear you.*

Drawing Out/Say More: Some iterations of wanting more info

- *Go on. / Say more.*
- *I’m interested in that.*
- *Can you unpack this a little further for me?*
- *Can you tell me more about that?*
- *Yes? / And?*
- [Resisting the impulse to answer and leaving silence]

Affirmation Responses: A number of ways to affirm what a player has said.

- *That makes sense.*
- *Lovely.*
- *Yes. / Indeed. / Sure.*
- *I can understand how you feel.*
- *Lots of journeyers respond this way.*
- *Of course.*
- *Certainly.*

When Things Are Intense: A number of ways to note if things are intense.

- *Wow.*
- *Seems like this is reverberating strongly.*
- *Lots of resonance in this quest?*
- *Lots coming up in relation to this.*
- *Sorry to hear that.*
- *I’m here.*
- *Thank you for sharing that.*
- *How do you feel about saying that?*

Response to Thanks: Mirror but underscore this is the job you do. Ie – focus attention less on YOU feeling pleased for doing a good job and more that you are happy they are happy.

- P: *Thank you for listening*
G: *It’s what I do.*
- P: *This is so special*
G: *I’m so glad that you feel that way.*
- G: *As always, I’m appreciative of your time and vulnerability*

Reminders of Role: A number of ways to remind players it's up to.

- *Ultimately you are in control.*
- *I'm simply here to help you get to your own mission.*
- *I know the cards but you know your own desires*

Acting as Witness: A number of ways to simply reflect back.

- *I bet that feels [way it might feel]*
- *I like your style.*
- *That sounds perfect/lovely/sad/hard*
- [Reframing in a larger context]
 - *P: I do all these risky things like drive without a seatbelt or smoke but I don't think of them as having a personal impact.*
G: You know these things are generally dangerous but it's hard to remember them as having that outcome on you
 - [restating/repeating/reframing/doubling what they said]
 - *P: But he wasn't there.*
G: And you were.
P: Yes.
 - *P: I just feel really vulnerable. And I don't know what to do.*
G: In an experience like that it makes sense to feel like you are exposed.

Ways to Buy Time: If you are negotiating a number of conversations, need to read something more in depth, need to take a second to understand or generally want time:

- *Give me a moment to understand what you've said here.*
- *I'm pondering your response.*
- *There's a lot here. Let me have a bit to unpack it.*
- *I'm thinking.*
- *Looking this over...*

Response to Weird text things: If something happens, just note like a normal text convo without blaming the textline system.

- *P: I just got two messages double.*
- *G: Hmm. Strange. Not what I sent.*

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- *I'm pondering your response.*

Responding to Lists of specifics: Careful of getting into book report mode. Either pull out a detail or ask what meaning they make of the thing that emerged.

- *Quite a list! What do you make of it?*
- *Many interesting things there. Any surprises?*
- *How did you pick these items?*
- *What made you include these versus others?*

Players wanting to “name” or “dissect”: If you are negotiating a number of conversations, need to read something more in depth, need to take a second to understand or generally want time:

- P: *Can I call you TEIS?*
- G: *Sure, if that's what you'd like*
- P: *You're a wizard!*
- G: *If it helps to picture me in this way, then that is what I will be for you.*

Ways to check in at end: You can get their assessment of an experience.

- *A successful quest?*
- *Did it feel like a useful card?*
- *Would you like to explore more like this?*
- *Would you say this got you closer to that overall mission?*

When you get something weird: Not sure what they are saying? Ask.

- *I don't know if I understand. Can you explain?*
- *What did you mean by that?*
- *Is this your response to the quest?*
- *It's hard to understand sometimes over this mode. Can you clarify?*

Requests for more cards: During first weeks

- *Alas, there are some finites in life and this is one.*
- *This is simply the way the game is played.*
- *I don't create the rules, I simply enact them.*