How to play Quill line

For 3 to 5 players. Kitchen table, yard or hallway. No contact.

You need: A clear floor, and something soft and short to be "the front": a soft toy, a rolled-up sock or a cardboard tube. Tape a paper leaf to it. Nothing tied on, and no cords or ties on or near anyone's neck. A real stick is for outdoors only, and only a short, blunt one, carried low.

1. Call it. One player calls "Quill line!" Everyone calls it back. The littlest player can call it a beat late; that is part of the game.
2. Pick the first rule. Say how the line is ordered: oldest first, youngest first, the biggest idea first, whoever has a hat first. Each round, change the rule.
3. March. Walk the line round the room or the yard. Walk, don't run.
4. Add a rule. Anyone may add one rule per round. The line must follow it.
5. Mirror. Call "Mirror!" The whole line turns around. The back is now the front.
6. The front is a thing. If two players both want the front, hand over the sock or tube with the leaf. Whoever holds it is the front, wherever they stand. Pass it round, handle first, so everybody gets a turn, then round again.
7. End. Call "Quill line!" once more. Smooth quills. Ask for five more minutes.

Safety. Clear the floor of toys. No pushing, pulling or grabbing to get to the front. Babies and toddlers join at their own pace, with a grown-up close enough to reach. If you play outside on a sunny day, take hats and water breaks. Play away from water, stairs and roads, with a grown-up close.

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Make your own rules

Three prompts. Everyone gets a turn.

1. A rule for who goes first. It can be silly: by favorite snack, by who woke up first, by the longest name.

2. A rule that changes the walk. Slow like fog, quick like a lizard, backwards like a mirror.

3. A rule for the front. What can you use to show who is the front, if nobody wants to go second? A soft toy? A sock? A paper leaf?

Then ask: what would you change if you played it again?

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