

Board Game Design Workshop Kit

Age: Tween/teen

Time: 1.5 to 2 hours

Supplies: Base game (Board, dice, wooden game pieces), board game modifier kits (blank dice, blank cards, more game pieces), design supplies (markers, rulers, pencils, erasers)

In this workshop, teens will be taught basic principles of game design. They will apply these skills to modify a base board game and create a new game. Participants will be expected to be able to explain what makes the new game more interesting and engaging.

Lesson plan

- Introductions (name and favorite game)
- Icebreaker: Name that Game (slideshow of images from board and video games; call out title)
- **Talk about paper prototypes**
 - Did you know that video games get made first on paper? Game makers would have to spend a LOT of money fixing things that go wrong, so first they make them on paper to test them. So, that's what we are going to do!
- Basic game elements
 - 5 things to think about (see attached handout)
 - **Theme** - the "feel" of the game (Are you battling dinosaurs, escaping from the zoo or super secret spies.)
 - **Mechanics** - how the players interact with the game (how can players move? Forward, backwards, side to side?)
 - **Dynamics** - the behavior the of the mechanics acting on the players over time (In a videogame this this is where super speed and jumping come in. A good example of a board game dynamics is the game Sorry! Players can land on slides and move 3 extra spaces in a turn, they can also steal other players spaces on the board. Another example would be Chutes and Ladders, players can move diagonally forwards and backwards at different points in the game.
 - **Aesthetics** - The players reaction/feelings (Are they having fun? This is the big question. If they aren't having fun what's the point?)
 - **"Aboutness"** What is your game really about? Battlefield isn't about WWII or modern warfare. It is game about communication and teamwork. Right? You can succeed and beat the other team if you don't communicate with your teammates.

- Other things to keep in mind
 - Test out each piece of game play you add. Does it work? Is it fun?
 - Write down the rules to your game as you come up with them.
 - Don't worry about being messy! Once you have worked out the details of your game you can create a final version of it.
- In groups of 3-4, play base game.
- Discuss
 - What is this game about? Was it fun? Why not?
 - What elements would make it more fun? What do you want your game to be about? (give examples- problem solving, collaboration, creativity, evolution, etc.)
 - What do YOU want YOUR game about? **Discuss with your group!**
Pick a rule writer! Each group comes up with theme; then they get the kit.
- Modify game (at least 60 minutes)
 - Create a board, rules, and name the game. Make sure you have a theme and an aboutness. Test play as you go.
- Tell the group what your game is about? What did you do to make it better?
- Switch groups and play other games.
- Wrap up/Discussion/Evaluation

How to REDESIGN YOUR GAME



- Monopoly ▪ Sorry! ▪ Trivial Pursuit ▪ Boggle ▪ Operation ▪

Step One: Planning

- Theme - the "feel" of the game
- Mechanics - Fundamental ways the players interact with the game
- Dynamics - the behavior of the mechanics acting on the players over time

Step Two: Execute

- Write down a draft of the rules
- Add game pieces, make modifications to the game board and play of the game
- Sketch out your theme using pencils and markers

Step Three: Test

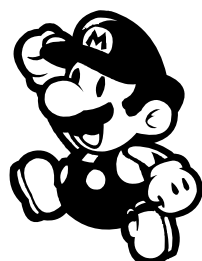
- Test each piece of added game play. You should do this as you are adding each new element of game play.
- Verify and Validate - ask yourself what the game is suppose to be about and if the current design is making that happen. Also double check each new idea or mechanic to make sure the game is still fun, all games are suppose to be fun.

Step Four: Execute Final Draft

- Create a final draft of your board game
- Make sure you have enough game pieces for each player
- Rewrite a final draft of your rules

Step Five: PLAY

- Play your game and share it with the other groups
- Have groups give you feedback on the gameplay and directions. Did they have fun? Were the directions easy to follow?



Theme

The theme of the game is what the game appears to be about, but theme is not necessarily the meaning of the game. For example *Battlefield* games are about teamwork and communication and not modern warfare. The same way Mario is not about plumbing, but instead it is a game about timing and reflexes.

Theme can be related to genre. Plays will often expect the nouns and verbs used to reflect the theme. When playing *World of Warcraft* you expect to see mages, warlocks and casting of spells. You can give your game a really elaborate backstory or just use design elements within your game to convey the theme.

"Aboutness"

The "aboutness" is what the game is all about. The meaning of the game may reflect the theme or it might be hidden in the game play. Games like *Pandemic* and *Flashpoint* are about cooperation and teamwork. Rather than working against your opponents you have to work together to beat the board. *Yahtzee* is a game about both luck and strategy, and *Settlers of Catan* is a game about strategy.

- Cranium ▪ Ticket to Ride ▪ Risk ▪ Yahtzee ▪ Chess ▪

Start

Jump ahead
one square

Rules: Each player will roll a six-sided die at the beginning of their turn and move forward that number of spaces. If you land on a square with instructions, follow those instructions. The first player to reach the end is the winner.

Roll again.
Move back that
many spaces

Roll again.
Move forward
that many
spaces

WIN

Go back three
spaces

Favorite game:

What part of the workshop did you enjoy the most?

What did you learn about game design in today's workshop?

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