

THE DIE WILL BE CAST

A BUNCH OF IDEAS ABOUT DESIGNING TABLETOP GAMES



Projekt realizowany
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Wrocław
miasto spotkań

Partner programu
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The dice will be cast

The Little Book of Board Game Design:

From concept to playable prototype

Welcome to the compendium of board game design at home! Here you'll find a few words about why games are important, as well as instructions and tips on how to create your own board game, including concept, mechanics and prototype testing. Discover the fun of game design, even if you're a beginner!

Enjoy the journey,

Dawid Giemza

Why are games important?

Fun

Board games offer incredible fun and the opportunity to have a great time with friends and family.

Creativity

Game design is a great opportunity to express your creativity, develop your imagination and participate in creating something unique.

Skills

Board games develop many skills, from logic and critical thinking to the ability to make quick decisions.

First Steps



Step 1: Emotions

The emotions that accompany gameplay are one of the most important elements of a board game, although this is rarely discussed and even less often taught. Many game developers seem to forget the importance of designing emotions in the player. Therefore, this is where we start!

Take a large sheet of paper and write on it all kinds of emotions you want the players to experience during and even after the game. Here are some important aspects connected to emotions.

1 Surprise

Its function is to prevent the predictability of gameplay.

2 Inertia

It's the steady pace of interesting events that keeps players engaged.

3 Strategy/Fun

Strategy is what encourages players to master the game over time, but fun should always be the key factor.

Step 2: Idea for the game

The second step in designing a board game is generating ideas. This can be the most exciting, but also seemingly the most difficult part of the process.

You can start your search for an idea by playing existing titles. This will give you ideas for your own designs. You'll learn how designers solved certain problems and dealt with different situations. And playing newer games will show you what is popular in the current market. You can also brainstorm with friends or family members, or even just write down any ideas that come to mind.

Finally, ask yourself these two questions:

1 What games are fun for me?

What do I want to play but can't because such a game doesn't exist?

2 What am I missing among the games available on the market?

And now you know - this is exactly the game you will create!

Step 3: Theme of the game

Many people believe that the theme is one of the most important elements of a board game. As you can see, for us it's only step 3. Contrary to what you might think, the choice of theme does not have to be well thought out and hit from the beginning. The prototyping phase is a time for change, both of the mechanics and the theme itself!

The theme can be abstract or based on history, culture or literature. The game can take place on a farm, in an abandoned house or in space. It can be realistic, fiction, horror, sci-fi, or fantasy.

1 Understandable

The theme should be understandable to you as a developer and to your players, and age-appropriate.

At the same time, one that inspires passion in you.

2 Interesting

Interesting, unique themes attract players and motivate them to play. However, the most important thing is to make it attractive to you - after all, you are the one who wants to play the game!

3 Unique flavor

Uniqueness refers to the elements that set your game apart. Those that are missing are the ones that made you create a new game after all!

Step 4: First prototype

Nothing matter most than a good idea. The basis of development is careful planning. Everything needs to be meticulously thought out, considered and dissected before we start work. Right? Not true! Even the best idea is worth nothing as long as it remains in your head. And even a very average idea carries experience and lessons when it is implemented. Therefore, now it's time for your first prototype.

1 Post-it notes

Reach for colorful post-it notes, or a few sheets of paper from a notebook. And for a pen.

This will be the base of your prototype, and you'll wrap up your entire game on this.

2 15 minutes

Set the stopwatch.

That's exactly how much time you have to create your first game. Not only is it possible, but the result may surprise you greatly!
Time to start...

3 Game

... and it's time to stop!

Play.

What have you been able to create? The basics of a war game? A short story? A game about plant growth?

Step 5: Elements of a game

The previous exercise was designed to show you how little it takes to create something that meets the definition of a game. A moment and a few pieces of paper were enough. What you have created is probably not perfect, but it may already be the basis for further work on the game. It may or may not. You can start over at any time. After all, it's only 15 minutes.

You may decide that your game will be based solely on cards, or you may be tempted to include other elements.

1 Cards

2 Dice

3 Board

4 Pawns

5 Tokens

6 Hourglass

A bit of Theory



What is a game?

There are very many definitions of games, which I will not quote here. Instead, I will share with you, Dear Reader, what elements make up a game from my point of view.

1 Purposefulness

We need to be clear about what we want to achieve through the game, both as a developer and as a player.

2 Theme

A clear and understandable theme that embeds the player in the atmosphere of the game and allows the player to experience it fully.

3 Mechanics

The rules of the game, which determine how players play and also interact with each other and with the game.

Designing game mechanics

Game mechanics are the complex gears that must work together to make a game fit for the player.

They are the rules or ludemes that govern and direct the player's actions and the game's response to them. They determine how the player acts and interacts with the game and others, the decisions he makes and the actions he takes. Game mechanics can be predetermined by the system or determined by the players themselves. It can change the state of the game, the options available to players and even other mechanics . Understanding game mechanics is essential to creating rich game experiences.

Designing game mechanics is a key step in the board game design process. There is no one correct way to design mechanics, but it is important to be curious and experiment!

Designing game mechanics

There are many different types of game mechanics and they can vary greatly depending on the type of game.

Some common examples of game mechanics include:

1 Movement

The way players move around the game board or surface.

2 Resource management

Players' decisions on how to acquire and use resources, such as money, cards or tokens.

3 Combat

The way in which players engage in combat or conflict with each other or with the game itself.

Designing game mechanics

Other frequently used mechanics include:

1 Rolling the dice

The way players use dice to determine outcomes or resolve conflicts.

2 Auctions

The way players bid on or buy items or resources.

3 Role-playing

The way in which players take on the roles of characters or avatars and interact with the game world.

There are also variations of the mechanics described above, for example:

Players can collect resources on their own, through their designated cards/pawns, or acquire them at auctions. They can also collect resource sets to earn points or other benefits.

Back to practice:
Let's prototype!



Prototype of the game

Once you have an idea for your game, the next step is to create an initial prototype.

As you did when building your first prototype, use scraps of cardboard to create a game board and turn improvised objects into game pieces. If the game includes cards, draw them yourself on paper or cardboard.

A board game prototype doesn't have to - or even should - be fancy - a quick mock-up is enough to let you try out the game and see how it works.

Don't worry too much about the appearance of the prototype. All that matters at this stage is whether the game works as it should. Attractive graphics will serve as distractions.

Creating prototypes of the game

Important note: We do not create one prototype but a whole series of prototypes! Developing a game is nothing more than creating a minimum version and building on it with more solutions that are in line with our assumptions. How? By the method of trial and error!

The prototyping process is all about getting it wrong most effectively. So don't create unnecessary assumptions that something will or won't work. Just put the change into play, play it and see how it worked. This will give you much more information than theoretical considerations and guesswork.

It is also very important to keep the changes between tests as small as possible. Change one element at a time. Introducing more variables will affect the gameplay too much and it will be more difficult to judge which element had the intended effect and which did not work.

Let's Test!



Testing

We conduct testing whenever there is a change in the game mechanics. This means that whatever new is added to the game or whatever is removed from it - we play! However, not only then. The more often we play our game, the more scenarios and variations of it we experience. This is an invaluable source of information about what works well and what needs balancing or fine-tuning.

In the early stages of game development, all we need to do is test for ourselves to see whether a change is desirable or has turned out to be a mistake.

On the other hand, when we are quite satisfied with the shape of our game and/or are curious about the opinions of others - it's time to playtest with people outside the developers. How to go about it?

Playtests

You recognize that this is the right time to start playtesting - accept my sincere congratulations!

Playtesting is the process of testing your game with a group of people other than the original game designers to see how it works and to identify any problems or issues. You can start by playing the game with friends or family members, and then move on to more serious playtesting with strangers or game design groups.

During playtesting, it's important to observe how players interact with the game. Take notes on what works and what doesn't, and ask for feedback from the players. This feedback can be invaluable in improving your game.

Who to invite to the tests

Players	Test Type	Test Result
Family and Friends	Quality tests	Feedback from friends and family allows you to improve your game.
Players from other houses	Qualitative and quantitative tests	Feedback from players from other houses allows the game to be polished.
Professionals	Qualitative and quantitative tests	The opinion of professionals provides valuable tips and suggestions related to improving gameplay.

Let's Polish It!



Improving the game

The final polishing stage of the game is a continuous process of improving and creating new and better versions of the game. Once you have your first version of the game, analyze its weaknesses and try to improve them to make the game even more interesting and enjoyable.

1 Listen to feedback

Listen to your players and make them happy. At the same time, be true to your goal.

2 Be crazy

Experiment with new ideas and game mechanics.

Don't limit yourself!

3 Remember to balance

Pay attention to keep the game balanced, non-countable and tailored to the players.

Summary

Designing and creating your own board game is a great way to spend time with family and friends. Whether you are creating your first game or your tenth, the process is still an experiment and an adventure.

Don't be afraid to get started and do what makes you happy!

I wish you all the best on your game development journey.

Have fun with it,

Dawid Giemza [davidgiemza@gmail.com]



About the Author

Dawid Giemza

Specialist in such fields as: psychology, coaching, marketing, and above all, game design and prototyping! He has been involved in this passion since he was a child, when he was already creating the first games and tormenting his grandfather with them. Throughout his life, he has tried (successfully) many career paths, only to return to game development each time. “If you can't beat someone, join them!” it became, in his case, the only right way!

Dawid is a professional lecturer at the Lower Silesian University, so we can expect a well-prepared, inspiring and constructive series of workshops.