

Crash Course Tabletop Design Workshop

by Jason Corace ++ email: corace@gmail.com ++ goldengrave.com/crashcourse.pdf

1. What is a game? Two definitions:

"A game is a form of play with goals and structure." - Kevin Maroney

"At its most elementary level then we can define game as an exercise of voluntary control systems in which there is an opposition between forces, confined by a procedure and rules in order to produce a disequilibrium outcome." - Brian Sutton Smith

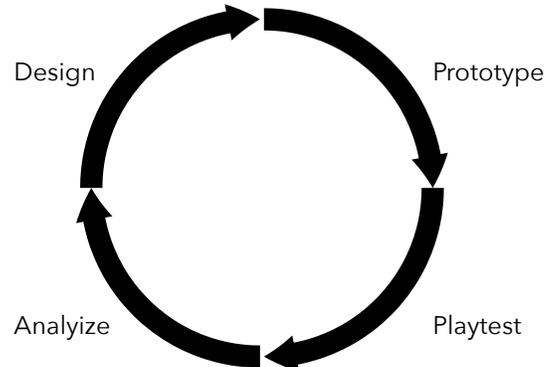
2. Why Tabletop Games?

- Most tabletop games are inherently social.
- Easy to prototype, no technical skills required.
- Help to learn the game design process.
- Designed to be portable/universal.
- Potential easy distribution through Print & Play.
- Good community of designers.

3. Some Terminology

Mechanic -	part of a game's system that covers one general or specific aspect of the game.
Core Mechanic-	the moment-to-moment activity of a player.
Prototype -	a working model of a game.
Playtest -	a test of the rules of and mechanics of a prototype game.
Iterative Design -	the process of prototyping, testing, analyzing refining.
Balance -	how the elements of a game are equalized relative to each player.
End-Game -	final period of a game that determines the winner.
King-Maker -	a losing player who has the control to decide the game.

4. Design Process



5. Playstyles

People have preferred ways of playing, as designers it is useful to consider which type of play styles we want our game's to support.

Example, some player's prefer games with complex economic systems with fewer player interactions. Game's with these styles are usually longer in duration and could be torture for casual social playstyles.

6. Common Mechanics

Area Control	- Small World
Auction Bidding	- For Sale
Betting Wagering	- Camel Up
Card Drafting	- Sushi Go
Co-operative	- Pandemic
Deck Building	- Dominion
Dice Rolling	- King of Tokyo
Hand Management	- Ticket to Ride
Modular Board	- Takenoko
Player Elimination	- Love Letter
Press Your Luck	- Incan Gold
Roll Playing	- Werewolf
Roll/Spin + Move	- Backgammon
Route Network Building	- Keyflower
Set Collection	- Jaipur
Sim. Action Selection	- 7 Wonders
Take That	- Coup
Trading	- Settlers of Catan
Trick-taking	- Tichu
Voting	- Dixit
Worker Placement	- Stone Age

7. Theme / Fantasy/ Narrative

Some games are purely abstract (Go, Mancala, Cribbage) but most games have some form of theme applied to them. Themes engage players in some form of fantasy and lead to the creation of an emerging stories based upon the player's actions and the system's response.

A designer's theme for a game can also help inform the game's mechanics, the player's understanding of the rules and the overall message of the game.

8. Playtesting

Running a playtest is an art upon itself. Mostly useful rules for running one.

- Let the game play by itself, do not interfere.
- Prepare questions you want players to answer.
- Keep track of the game's progress, stage, turns.
- Have a few variations prepared to test.
- Watch both the player's game/social actions.

9. Writing Rules

Overview

- *what is the narrative, setting, basic goal of the game*

Goal

- *What are players trying to do, how is the game ended, winner determined.*

Setup

- *material setup*
- *initial assets*
- *who goes first*

Turn Structure

- *reiterate what the player can do on their turn. This helps to simplify the rules in the player's mind and lets them focus on what basic actions they need to take.*

Rules

- *go from the basic general rules to the specific*

End Game

- *how does one win*
- *how is the game scored*

Diagrams

- *use throughout.*

11. Resources

Some Designers to Know

Matt Leacock	Richard Garfield
Renier Knizia	Andreas Seyfarth
Uwe Rosenberg	Antoine Bauza
Stefan Field	Bruno Cathala
Alan R. Moon	Sid Sackson
Klaus Teuber	Vlaada Chvátil
Martin Wallace	Susan McKinley Ross

Community

[Board Game Geek](#)
[Board Game Designers Forum](#)
[Reddit Tabletop Design Group](#)

Design

[Gamasutra](#)
[Spielbox](#)
[UCLA GameLab](#)
[NYU Game Center Videos](#)
[Dice Tower Game Reviews](#)
[Renier Knizia Articles](#)
[Matt Leacock Articles / Interviews](#)
[Art of Design Interviews](#)
[Board Game Quest Interviews](#)

Publishing / Print and Play

[Self Publishing Article](#)
[Game Crafter](#)
[Print and Play Productions](#)

Reading

[Oxford History of Board Games - David Parlett](#)
[A Gamut of Games - Sid Sackson](#)
[Hoyle's Rules of Games: Third Revised and Updated Edition](#)
[A Theory of Fun - Ralph Koester](#)
[Homo Ludens - Johan Huizinga](#)
[Man, Play Games - Roger Calios](#)