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INSIDER

The Premier Guide to Casual Board and Card Games
Issue #10 – Winter 2015



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ALPHA BANDITS

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With different levels of play (basic & advanced) the game is perfect for all ages and strategy levels...from kids and families to the most devious **ALPHA BANDITS!**



Learn more at WiggityBang.com



GAME FEATURES



ALPHA BANDITS features high quality components like the black velvet loot bag and player masks (tile shields), but the real gems of the game are the tiles.



98 LETTER TILES

Use double-sided tiles to form words and score points.



12 BANDIT TILES

Six types of Bandit Tiles allow players to wreak havoc on opponents!



2 RARE GEMSTONES

Rare Gemstones act as any letter and double your word score.



Game includes instructions, pencil, tiles, masks & loot bag.





Concept

If you couldn't use words, how would you communicate? What if you also couldn't use physical gestures, draw, or write? If you're not telepathic, you'd probably be out of luck – unless you own *Concept*.

Concept is a unique and fascinating game that encourages you to think and communicate in a whole new way. The board features 117 simple icons, ranging from colors and shapes to materials, genders, body parts, forms of transportation, and many more. A team of two players draws a card and chooses a word or phrase to communicate to the rest of the group. To do so, they can only make use of the pictures on the board and up to 5 sets of pawns and cubes.

First, the team places the question mark pawn on the board to demonstrate the main concept. If the word were "Ghostbusters," they might decide to put the pawn on the video camera icon (representing a movie). Then, they would use additional cubes of the same color to clarify the main concept, perhaps placing several cubes on the male icon (since it is a movie about men as the main characters). This is still vague, so they can use additional pawns to identify related subconcepts. Perhaps they would choose to put a new pawn on the conflict icon, with cubes of that color on death, fictional, transparent, and flight. "A movie about men... who fight dead, fictional people...zombies? Who are transparent and can fly...ghosts? Ghostbusters!"

If the others are still having trouble guessing, the players can try to communicate more subconcepts, such as the color of the Ghostbusters' suits or that they also fight a giant, white marshmallow man. The first player to guess the correct answer scores 2 points, while each



MSRP: \$40
Designer: Alain Rivollet
Publisher: Repos Production
4-12+ players, ages 10+, 40 mins.

of the players presenting the clues scores 1 point. If no one can guess correctly, no points are scored.

If you enjoy games like *Pictionary*, *Taboo*, and *Charades*, you simply must give *Concept* a try. No drawing or acting skills are required, which makes it even more inclusive of different types of people. If you're not up for a formal game, ditch the scoring and you still have a great activity to keep your group entertained. You'll have lots of fun and laughter – particularly when the players grossly misinterpret the clues – but there are also many educational benefits, as well. It is a good mental exercise to break concepts down into individual components, which has parallels in grammar, programming, mathematics, etc. There is also plenty of room for creativity and thinking outside the box.



Chris James
Editor-in-Chief and Award-Winning Game Designer



Forbidden Desert

In the realm of cooperative games, *Forbidden Island* is a great choice. However, its younger sibling, *Forbidden Desert*, offers many of the same qualities while delivering a new and fresh gaming experience.



In *Forbidden Desert*, players are a team of adventurers who are on a mission to recover the remnants of an ancient flying machine that's buried beneath the desert sand. After a crash landing, their helicopter is destroyed and they must find and rebuild the flying machine to escape certain death in the desert's harsh conditions.

The board consists of 24 desert tiles in a 5x5 grid, with one space empty (where a sandstorm is raging). 4 of the flying machine's parts are hidden somewhere on the board – to win, players must work together to find and gather these parts and rebuild the machine before it's too late. Players can choose from several options on their turn: move to an adjacent tile, remove sand from a tile, excavate (flip face up) the tile they are currently on, or pick up a part. Before a part can be picked up, however, two clue tiles must be discovered: one that indicates the row in which the part is hidden, and another that indicates the column.

At the end of each turn, the desert wreaks havoc. Several storm cards are drawn, which can either increase the sandstorm's intensity (requiring more

cards to be drawn each turn), shift the location of the storm (and also burying affected tiles under sand), or cause the sun to beat down (requiring players to drink water from their canteens). The game ends and all players lose if anyone dies of thirst, the sandstorm reaches full intensity, or the players are buried in sand (i.e., all the sand markers are depleted). Fortunately, players can make use of equipment cards and special abilities that can greatly assist them in escaping the desert alive.

Forbidden Desert offers an action-packed and challenging experience that is even better than its predecessor. The motion and intensity of the storm, the limited supply of water, and the discovery of hidden parts are expertly designed mechanics that really draw you into the game emotionally. What's more, the folks at Gamewright have once again outdone themselves on component quality and production value – in addition to great artwork, the sculpts fit together into a constructible flying machine, complete with rotating parts. For anyone interested in cooperative games, this is a must-have.

MSRP: \$25

Designer: Matt Leacock

Publisher: Gamewright

2-5 players, ages 10+, 45 mins.





Splendor

Splendor is a casual economic game in which players take on the role of rich merchants during the Renaissance. The goal is to gain the most prestige by acquiring development cards (representing mines, transportation methods, and artisans) and gaining the attention of nobles.

At the beginning of the game, 3 rows of 4 cards each are laid out on the table. Each row has a different level of difficulty associated with the cards. There are also stacks of gem tokens available, which are needed to purchase the cards. On a turn, the current player can choose to take 3 gem tokens of different colors, take 2 gem tokens of the same color, take 1 gold token (wild) and reserve 1 card (add it to his hand), or purchase a card. To purchase a card, the player must spend tokens equal to the cost indicated on the card (e.g., 2 diamonds and 2 rubies).

Purchased cards have a bonus gem displayed on them that can be used in place of a gem token of the same type, making it easier to purchase more (or higher-priced) cards. Many cards also have a number of prestige points associated with them. Certain sets of cards will attract nobles, which are worth 3 additional prestige points. The game ends after any player reaches 15 prestige points, and the player with the most points wins.

Splendor is fast-paced and entertaining. Clocking in at less than 30 minutes, this game fits the bill as a great casual game that offers up interesting choices without frying your brain. Strategy is important, but there are many ways to succeed, and some luck is thrown in to keep things interesting. The different levels of cards result in a natural progression throughout the game — the more low-level cards you have, the easier

it will be to purchase cards at higher levels and ultimately gain prestige more rapidly. Production value is fantastic, with jaw-dropping artwork and solid, hefty tokens. This is an all-around good game.

MSRP: \$40

Designer: Marc André

Publisher: Space Cowboys

2-4 players, ages 10+, 30 mins.





Coup

Coup is a small bluffing game that plays in as little as 5 minutes, yet has become immensely popular among many groups. As a powerful official in a corrupt futuristic government, your goal is to manipulate, bribe, and bluff your way into absolute power.



MSRP: \$15

Designer: Rikki Tahta

Publisher: Indie Boards & Cards

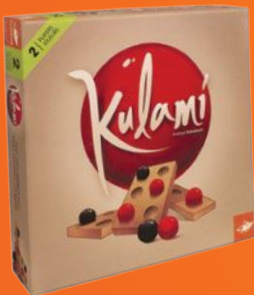
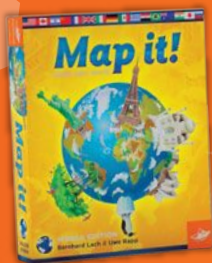
2-6 players, ages 13+, 15 mins.

Each player is randomly dealt 2 cards that indicate which government officials he influences. These cards are kept secret until a coup or assassination occurs, or the player is caught in a bluff. Once both cards are revealed, the player is eliminated from the game — the last player remaining is the winner.

On a turn, a player can take 1-2 coins, launch a coup against another player (costing 7 coins), or take actions that are

specific to certain roles: taking 3 coins, stealing 2 coins from another player, making an assassination attempt, or exchanging cards. Certain roles can counteract the actions of other roles. But here's the kicker: you don't actually have to own a particular card to take that action. You can choose to bluff about it instead. However, if someone challenges your bluff, you will lose influence and must flip one of your cards face up. You will also lose influence if you wrongfully challenge another player.

Coup is a game that is ultimately about bluffing, yet a completely honest player can still win. While bluffing games aren't for everyone, if you typically enjoy them you'll likely find this one very appealing. Its short play time allows for many back-to-back rounds and makes it less painful to be eliminated. While the game is ideal with more players, it supports as few as 2.



FoxMind



Let Them Eat Shrimp!

Let Them Eat Shrimp! I wholeheartedly agree — shrimp are some of the best delicacies of the sea. To eat these shrimp, however, you will need to place your tiles wisely so as to cover the most shrimp without disturbing the sharks.

This game is played on a modular board that contains different sections combined into one. On the board, you'll find many sea creatures, including shrimp, starfish, sharks, and fish eggs in different colors and shapes, which represent the 4 types of tiles in the game. Each player begins the game with 1 of each tile and 3 egg tokens.

On a turn, the current player places a tile on the board adjacent to any other tile. If the tile covers one of the sea creatures, he must take the action associated with it — for a shrimp, he takes a shrimp token; for fish eggs, he takes a tile of the shape indicated; for a starfish, he rolls the die and earns an extra tile; for a shark, he rolls the die and loses a tile. If a player doesn't have a tile available when needed, he must give up an egg token to continue. If he doesn't have any egg tokens available, he is eliminated. The last player remaining in the game after the board is too full to continue, wins. If multiple players remain at the end of the



game, they add up points for shrimp tokens and sets of fish tiles in their possession, and the player with the most points wins.

Let Them Eat Shrimp is a charming tile-laying game that's quick to teach and accessible to almost anyone. It is especially suitable for families — the basic rules can be picked up quickly by younger kids, while the advanced rules add a bit more challenge for the older kids and adults. Each tile placement offers a trade-off between gaining the best bonuses while also limiting the options available to other players. The inclusion of multiple scoring methods increases strategic possibilities, as well.

MSRP: \$36

Designer: Steve Finn

Publisher: Dr. Finn's Games

2-5 players, ages 6+, 20-30 mins.

Chocoly

Since we're talking about delicacies, here's another favorite: chocolate! However, there are so many choices: white, milk, or dark? In *Chocoly*, you make your choice then try to group together the largest possible area of your color. However, when your sweet-toothed opponents cover your chocolate with their own, it may leave a sour taste in your mouth.

Each player receives 4 tiles and 3 red tokens. The tiles contain various combinations of chocolate squares. On a turn, a player places 1 tile, then draws a new one to replace it. Each tile must be placed so that at least one of the chocolate pieces on the tile

connects to an identical piece already on the table. Up to 3 times during the game, a player may instead choose to stack a tile on top of existing ones — this can be useful for creating a larger area of one's own color or dividing an opponent's area. Stacked tiles are marked with a red token to prevent further stacking. After all the tiles have been placed, the player with the largest area of connected chocolate squares enjoys a sweet victory.

While it can't satisfy your cravings for chocolate, *Chocoly* certainly offers up satisfying gameplay. It's an abstract game with a pinch of luck to spice things up. Choosing the right times and locations to stack tiles is key to winning, and clever placement can suddenly swing the game in your favor. The artwork and components are simple yet delectable, and there is support for up to 4 players, which is always a plus. 🎲



MSRP: \$20

Designer: Steffen Mühlhäuser

Publisher: FoxMind

2-4 players, ages 8+, 15 mins.



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Blake Evans-Pritchard

Journalist and Casual Games
Enthusiast (Editorial)



Violetta Polese

Italian Travel and Photo
Journalist (Photography)

The moment we got a look at *Gaia*, published by Canadian start-up Tiki Editions, we knew it was going to be a big hit with casual gamers. This may have had something to do with it selling out on the very first day of Essen or simply because no one seemed to have a bad word to say about it. There are many world creation games out there, but few are as addictive and playable as *Gaia*.

Tiles are used to create a world in which you construct and populate cities. One of the beauties of this game is that there is no scoring system — the winner is simply the first player to place all their meeples on the board. Meeples are placed in cities that have the right conditions as stated on the card, such as being close to water and forest. But watch out for the natural disaster cards, which can suddenly turn the world upside down. This game is going to be huge — in both Europe and North America.



Gaia is a fun world creation game with no scoring system — be the first player to place all your meeples on the board to win.



Game designer Mike Fitzgerald teaches his new game, *Diamonds*, to eager players.

If you're familiar with the classic trick-taking game of *Whist*, *Diamonds*, published by Stronghold Games, is very easy to pick up. The designer, Mike Fitzgerald, chose to create a game that adhered pretty closely to the classic rules of *Whist*, but with some extra twists that take the strategy to a whole new level. Card aficionados should have little difficulty learning the game — the rules can be explained in under five minutes — but mastering the tactics is where the real intrigue comes in.

The idea is to acquire diamond crystals and place them in your safe. Each suit has a different power, which is triggered either when it is used to win a trick or discarded: diamonds are used to transfer crystals directly into the safe; hearts transfer crystals to a store just outside your safe; spades are used to transfer crystals from this store into your safe; and clubs are used to steal crystals from other players. The game also works very well with two players, and it's not always easy to find a good two-player casual game.

• • •

Sushi Dice, designed by Henri Kermarrec and published by Sit Down!, is a fast-paced dice rolling game in which two players race to be the first to create a plate of sushi by matching their dice rolls with the images on a card. Keep the dice that you need and reroll the rest, as fast as you can. The first player to complete the tray of sushi hits the bell and wins that round.

But there is more to the game than this, and these additional elements are what make it a worthwhile addition to the

Essen 2014: The Event

Game designer Mike Fitzgerald sat alone at a table with a game he had spent the past 18 months developing. I asked if we could join in.

It was the fourth and final day at the Spiel board game convention, one of the largest in the world, in Essen, Germany. We were already familiar with *Diamonds*. But now we were with my sister-in-law, and I thought, what better way to introduce her to the game than if the designer could show it off?

He had probably played the game countless times during the four-day fair, yet he was more than happy to show us how it played.

“You probably always win at this,” I said as he was dealing.

“Not really,” he replied. “I like to try new things.”

His first move surprised and confused me in equal measure — he handed me a couple of diamonds, the most powerful suit of the game. Only when we completed the round did I suddenly understand his tactics.

Three rounds into the game, our five-week-old son — who quite possibly was the youngest visitor at Essen — decided he was hungry and we had to make our apologies and abandon the game. But not before we had counted our diamonds and found, astonishingly, that I had won.

Beating a designer at his own game is always a nice accolade to have. If we had



Sushi Dice is a frantic dice game where players must be quick and vigilant to win.

casual gamer's collection. Whilst you are rolling your own dice, keep one eye on the dice of your opponent to make sure that he doesn't roll a nasty ingredient. As soon as you see that he does, shout "Yuck!" and your opponent has to reroll all his dice. Meanwhile, the other players that are not dueling off watch both sets of dice. If they see both of the dueling players roll a nasty ingredient at the same time, they shout "Chop!" and take possession of the dice. This is a game where your eyes have to be everywhere.

been able to complete the game, however, he probably would have made a comeback. Still, he was most gracious in his defeat.

Fitzgerald has been designing board games for the past 20 years, but has only just become a full-time game designer. For him, *Diamonds* represents a very important landmark. Not only does it coincide with his 20th anniversary of game design, but it is also the first game he has published since giving up his previous career as a radio DJ in New York.

"There are a lot of very good trick-taking games out there, but they often change the basic rules," said Fitzgerald. "I wanted to create a game that has a fairly gentle learning curve but includes an extra element of skill so that the better player will find new opportunities to outwit his opponents."

El Gaucho, published by Argentum Verlag, is a set collection game in which players take on the roles of cattle barons trying to lasso the finest cattle that will earn the most money at market. The game is played on a board with two parts. One is used for the gauchos to perform particular actions, such as selling or stealing cattle. The other area of the board is reserved for the pastures, where players can add cattle to their collections. The game is dice-based, and actions are performed according to the numbers rolled.



In El Gaucho, players try to lasso the finest cattle to earn the most money.

There are a couple of clever elements to the game. Cattle must only be added to sets in sequence. Thus, you might want to take the white cow that is worth five pesos before the one that is worth six. Another nice element is that you have to strategize in advance. Actions are not

There is always something for everyone at Essen, whether you are a hardcore gamer or simply a fan of casual games.

This year, we had brought along Andreas from Germany. Despite living only an hour from Essen, and hearing about the fair in the German press every year, he had never thought of coming before.

Andreas might best be described as a casual game player, counting as one of his favorite games the iconic German board game *Settlers of Catan*, and wasn't too sure what to expect. But when he got here he liked what he found.

"It's a lot bigger than I thought it would be," he said. "I play quite a lot of games and it's always really interesting to try something new."



performed immediately, so you have to put your gauchos in place ahead of time, in line with the cattle that you want and what you think other players are up to. This is a fun family game that you'll keep coming back to.

• • •

Prohis, designed by Marc Brunnenkant and published by Blackrock Editions, is a clever card game of smuggling and bluffing. The idea is to try to get your illicit contraband through customs, hidden amongst goods that are perfectly legal, and hope that you don't get caught by the other players. If you manage to smuggle through the goods, you will profit from their sale. But if they are seized, then your goods will end up in the warehouse of one of your opponents.

Bluff your way into getting a convoy through customs — pretend that it contains more contraband than it does, or that it's totally above-board when it's not. A good poker face comes in handy. Offer bribes to other players to encourage them not to check the convoy or raise suspicions when they are not really founded. This is a game that is quick and easy to pick up, but endlessly enjoyable to play.



Smuggle illicit contraband in Prohis.

Building on the success of its popular deck-building game, *Trains*, Alderac Entertainment Group (AEG) has come out with a sequel that is also sure to be a hit. The idea behind *Planes*, designed by David Short, is to move passengers around the departure lounge in order to board all five members of your party on your designated plane. The game is quick to learn, but mastering the best strategy takes quite a bit longer — certainly far more time than was afforded at Essen.

Casual gamers who don't like wading through pages of rules will be happy that there is always someone on hand to give a run-through of a game — although this isn't always the person who designed it!

• • •

It's not just gamers that are big fans of Essen — the fair is also one of the top events on the calendar of most board game publishers.

“Essen is especially invaluable for an American publisher because it is much harder to get our games into Europe,” said Stephen Buonocore, president of Stronghold Games. “Essen is not only a very good marketing opportunity, but also great for developing relationships with other European publishers, because I'm then going to be able to take back their games for co-publishing.”

For David Duperret, co-founder of new publisher Tiki Editions, which publishes *Gaia*, it was his first time at the fair as the director of a game company.

“I came here last year with another company that I worked for and it was much cooler,” he said. “I had the chance to play some games and buy some games, like everyone should do — that's why you're here. It was a much faster tempo this time.”

Still, he found Essen to be very worthwhile, as it helped generate a lot of interest for *Gaia*, the game that he launched his new company with. Duperret says that he never expected the game, which sold out on the first day, to do so well and regretted sending only one crate over from China, where it is manufactured.

The concept is simple: you can move the passengers on any square, whatever color they are. You must pick them all up and can move as many spaces as there are passengers, leaving one passenger behind in each space. You can only board your plane with the exact number, so you must carefully calculate how many passengers you need in a particular space in order to reach your plane without overshooting. That is where the real cleverness comes in, though there are other elements to the game, too, such as mission cards and victory points. *Planes* may be marketed as a sequel to *Trains*, but it is nice that AEG has decided to do something that is completely different. 🎲



From top left to bottom right: a buzz of excitement as game enthusiasts sit down to try the very latest releases; well-known game characters greet visitors — this one is from *World of Munchkin* by Steve Jackson Games; bargains aplenty at Essen; plenty to keep children occupied, too.

Finding myself thoroughly exhausted when Sunday evening came around, I made my way to Essen's central railway station, along with our five-week old son.

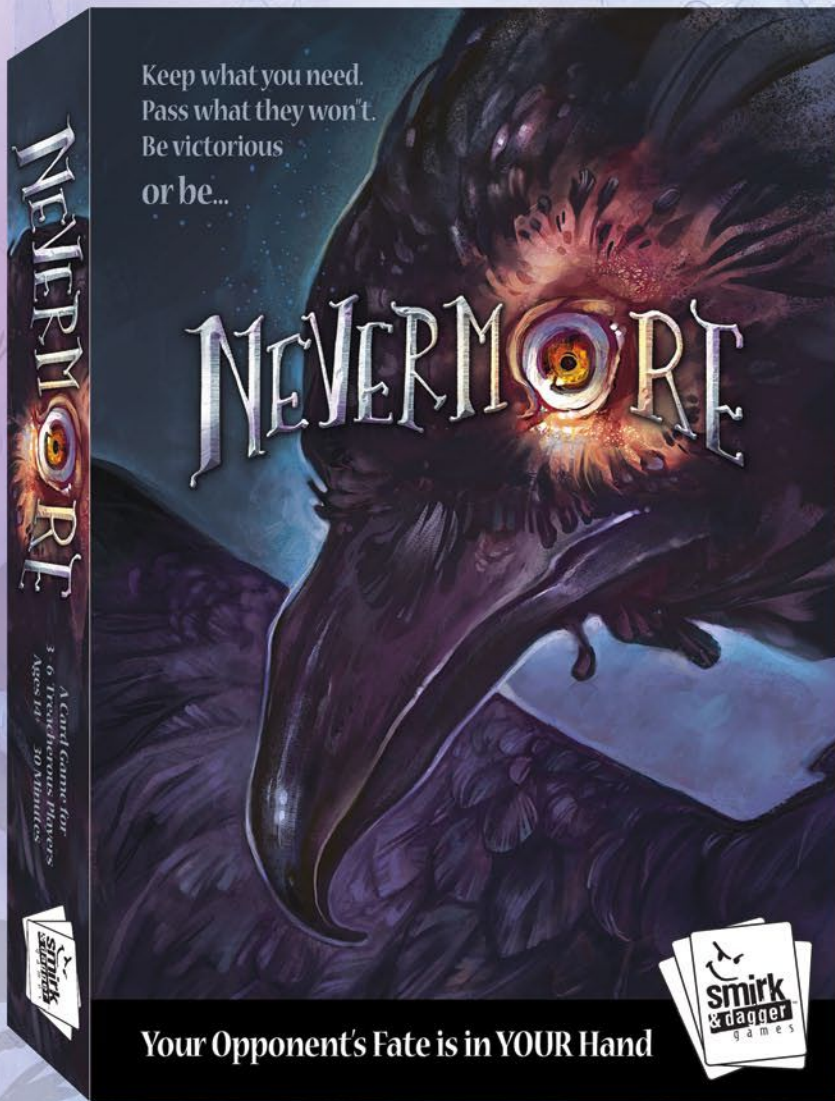
I knew something was amiss when the train that I had been patiently waiting for suddenly disappeared from the screen. Germany's train drivers were striking.

In a moment of inspiration, I suddenly understood why the fair had been so much quieter today than

on other days: people who had known about the strike, unlike me, had decided to stay away.

I was told that I could probably take a train from a nearby German town, but I had sudden visions of being stranded somewhere in the remote German countryside. We decided to find a hotel.

It was nice to experience Essen at both its most hectic times and its quietest time (Sunday), even if it meant that I wasn't able to get home to The Netherlands that night. 🎲



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What's wrong with this picture?



Boris Lysynski

*Owner of Twice The Fun Games
in Ontario, Canada*





Why do some people accept spending more than double the price of an average game to have a single evening out with friends, but are reluctant to spend it at their local game store? I'll admit not everyone will do this, and in my experience most don't. Most gamers that appreciate the value

of what's in the box have been playing for some time. Typically, it's those that are new to gaming that suddenly experience heart failure when they see *Citadels* (a card game by Fantasy Flight Games) selling for \$25. Let's take a step back, do the math, and see if this game is really worth the price.

First, let's look at a few activities that people enjoy, and their typical costs (in USD):

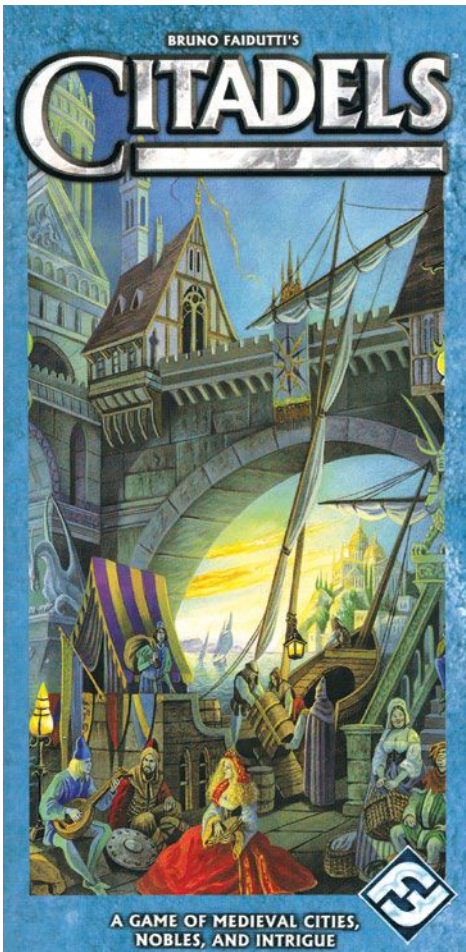
| Activity | Basic cost/person | | Additional cost/person | | Total cost/person |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|---|------|-------------------|
| An evening sports game | 200-level seats | \$100 | Beer, snacks | \$20 | \$120 |
| An afternoon at the ski hill | Lift ticket | \$55 | Ski rental | \$35 | \$90 |
| A relaxing round of golf | 18 holes | \$50 | Clubs & cart rental | \$30 | \$80 |
| Shooting your friends with paintballs | Field admission | \$20 | Paintballs, air, gun & protective gear rental | \$40 | \$60 |
| Casual dinner and drinks with friends | Entrée | \$20 | Appetizer, dessert, drink/alcohol | \$20 | \$40 |
| Movie with a drink and a snack | Adult ticket | \$10 | Drink, popcorn, candy | \$10 | \$20 |

Now, let's look at the hourly cost for each activity so that we can compare apples to apples (no pun intended):

| Activity | Total cost/person | Average duration | \$/hr/person |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| An evening sports game | \$120 | 3 hours | \$40.00 |
| An afternoon at the ski hill | \$90 | 4 hours | \$22.50 |
| A relaxing round of golf | \$80 | 4 hours | \$20.00 |
| Shooting your friends with paintballs | \$60 | 2 hours | \$30.00 |
| Casual dinner and drinks with friends | \$40 | 2 hours | \$20.00 |
| Movie with a drink and a snack | \$20 | 2 hours | \$10.00 |

The longer the activity, the cheaper the hourly cost for the activity; so, dropping \$60 per person for an evening with friends isn't bad, right? Dinner at 6:00 just before the movie that starts at 8:30, with the night wrapping up at 11:00: \$60 over 5 hours works out to **\$12 per hour**.





Now let's take a look at games — specifically, the *Citadels* card game I mentioned earlier for \$25. From the box, *Citadels* is a game for 2 to 8 players with a play time of 20 to 60 minutes.



| <i>Citadels</i> (\$25) | Number of players (2-8) | Play time | \$/hr/person |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Worst case | 2 | 1/3 hour | \$37.50 |
| Best Case | 8 | 1 hour | \$3.13 |

But, honestly, few people buy a game, play it once, and never play it again. Personally, I have games on my shelf that I've had for years and played each many times, but I'll be extremely conservative and expect that a game will get a minimum of 6 plays before it's sent to the boneyard.

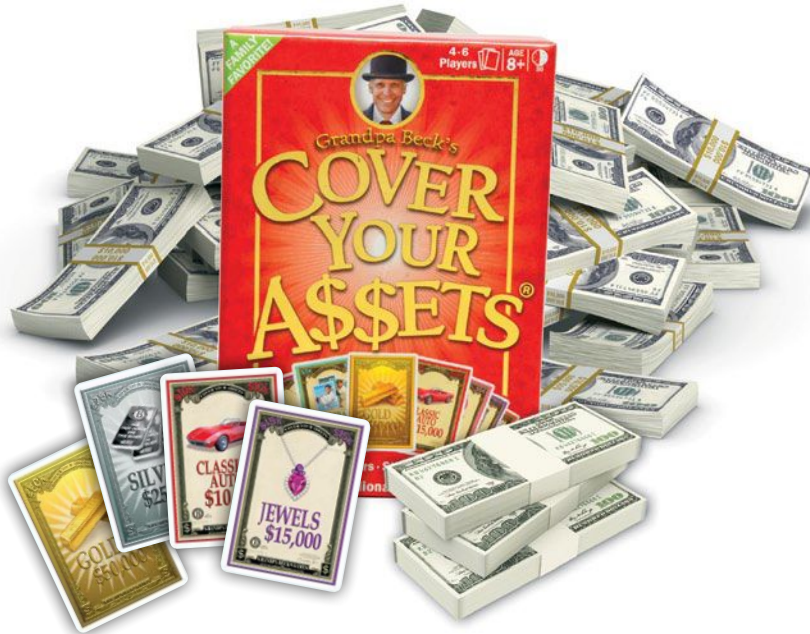
| <i>Citadels</i> (\$25) | \$/hr/person | Total plays | \$/hr/person/play |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Worst case | \$37.50 | 6 | \$6.25 |
| Best Case | \$3.13 | 6 | \$0.52 |

\$12 per person, per hour for dinner and a movie, versus \$6.25 per person, per hour for a game (with only 2 players) — can you see the entertainment value? In this context, \$25 for a game really isn't much, you say; you're right, it isn't.



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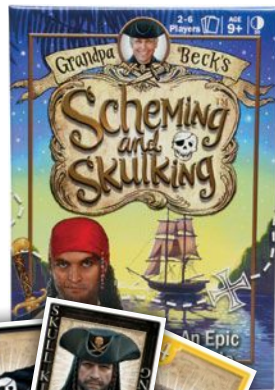


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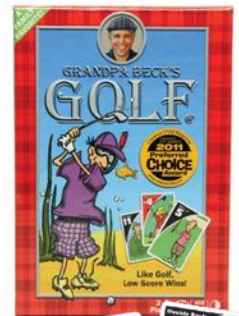
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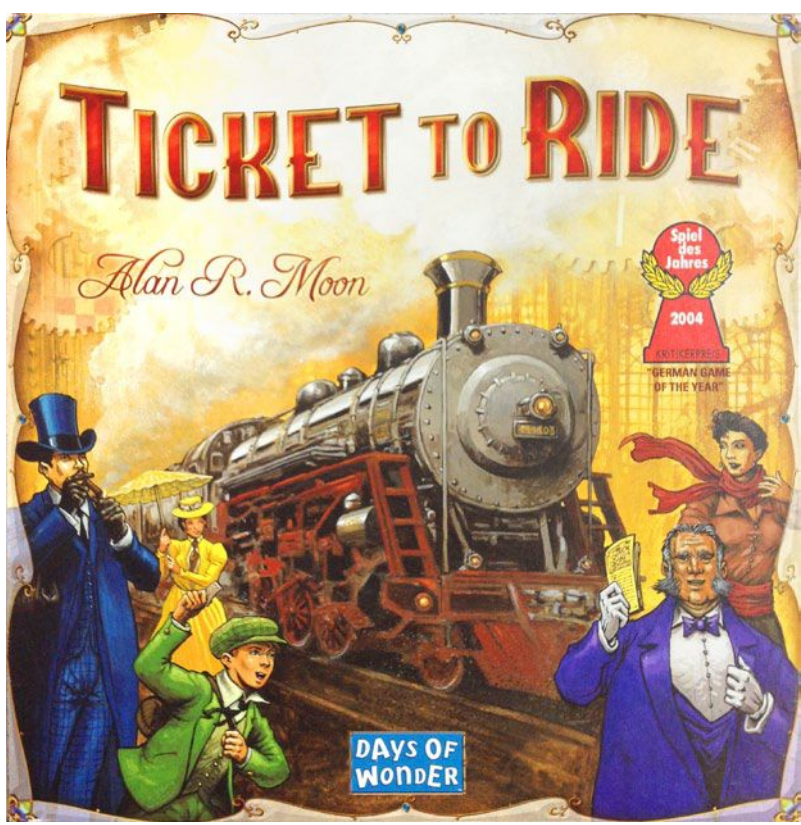
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New releases tend to cost a few extra bucks, and so do hot titles;

I'll pick a game from Board Game Geek's Family Top Ten: *Ticket to Ride*, by Days of Wonder, which has a retail price of \$50. I'll use the same criteria as *Citadels* (number of players, play time, and six times played – though I don't know anyone who has tossed their copy of *Ticket to Ride* in the boneyard after only six plays). From the box, *Ticket to Ride* is a game for 2 to 5 players, with a play time of 30 to 60 minutes. As you can see below, the value for a game improves and continues to be significantly better with more plays. While one evening out costs \$12 per person, per hour, *Ticket to Ride* played only 6 times drops to between \$8.33 and \$1.67 per person, per hour!



| <i>Ticket to Ride</i> (\$50) | Players (2-5) | Play time | \$/hr/person | Total plays | \$/hr/person/play |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Worst case | 2 | 1/2 hour | \$50.00 | 6 | \$8.33 |
| Best case | 5 | 1 hours | \$10.00 | 6 | \$1.67 |

But, again, let's be honest:

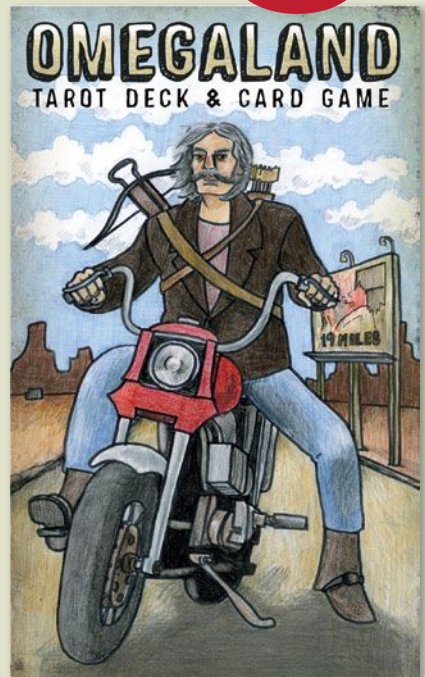
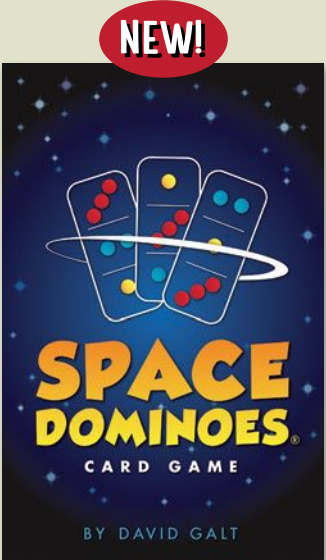
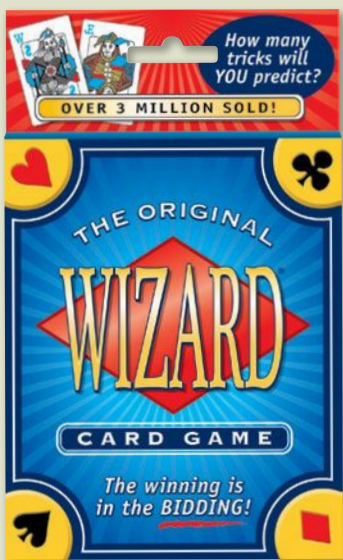
Who doesn't keep their games after 6 plays? And, aren't there usually more than 2 players playing a game? Dedicated gamers can get 6 plays out of one game over a single weekend; if they play the same game over a weekend once a month, the number of plays increases to 72 plays per year. Once again, let me be extremely conservative and say that the number of plays is 1/3 of that: 24 plays per year (or 2 plays per month). *Ticket to Ride* came out in 2004 and is currently ranked #7 in Family Games and #75 in Board Games with our friends at Board Game Geek; it's by no means unreasonable to say that many copies of *Ticket to Ride* have seen 240 plays or more in their 10-year lifetime.

| <i>Ticket to Ride</i> (\$50) | \$/hr/person | Total plays over lifetime | \$/hr/person/play |
|------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Worst case (2 players) | \$50.00 | 240 | \$0.21 |
| Best Case (5 players) | \$10.00 | 240 | \$0.04 |

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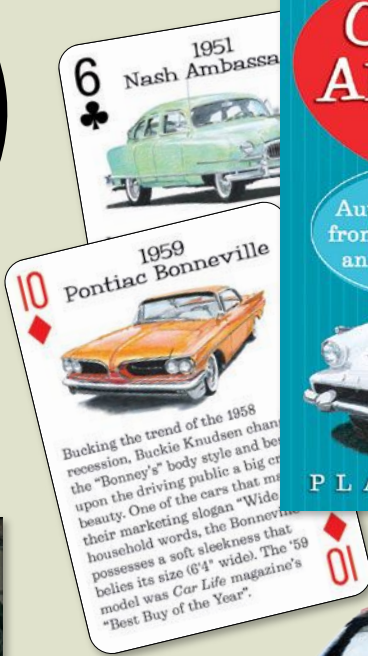
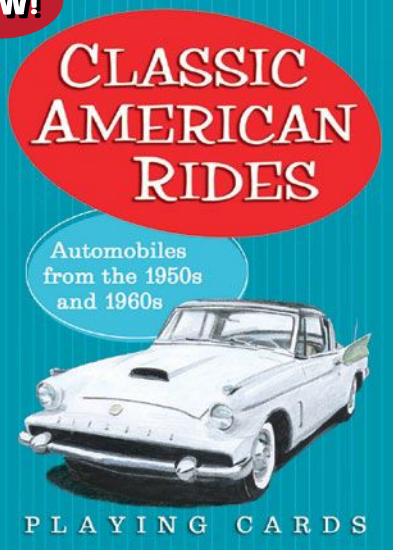
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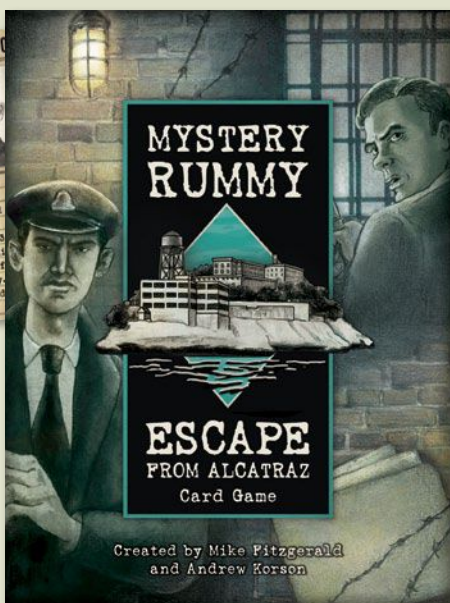


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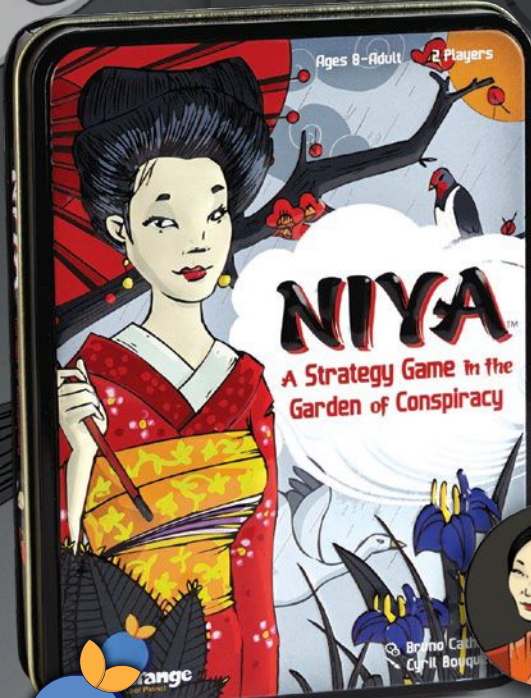


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(and How to Avoid Them)



You bought the game, listened to the podcasts, read the articles and blogs. You're ready to teach it to your friends. When did it go south on you? If memory serves, it was just after, "Oh, I forgot to mention..." and Bryan knocked you cold with a handful of dice for the key rule you forgot. Can this really happen? Is this another tale of horror that might end up on a podcast?



Toby T. Gee

*Freelance Writer, Game Zealot,
and Random Variable*



Teaching games

Teaching games has its headaches — hopefully not head injuries — but it’s also highly rewarding and often how you get games to the table. I’ve yet to find a fellow gamer that is itching to take your game and invest the time to explain the rules so you don’t have to bother. If you are buying games, you will likely have to teach players how to play. That experience can determine whether your games see the table or gather dust as a collection. How you deliver the rules can ensure a gratifying gaming event while helping avoid mishaps. As I have spoken with gamers, publishers, and convention organizers, I have found common elements: a balance between the mechanics of teaching and the art of delivering the experience.

Knowing a player’s game vocabulary, or the games they’ve played, is important in deciding what game to put on the table and what examples to use when teaching. Kathleen Mercury, one of the organizers for the St. Louis gaming convention called *Geekway to the West*, always asks for this information: “It’s about the player, and you are a player too, but when you’re teaching a game, you have to remember that you’re speaking to an audience. The more you can ascertain, make sure they understand, the better experience they’re going to have and the better experience you’re going to have.”

Understanding game vocabulary gives you the ability to leverage their experiences into your explanation. It gives the player something to identify with. No game is easy to learn if you don’t speak in terms players understand. I’ve met people that love games, but have never played *Yahtzee*; only party style games. If you’re teaching them *King of Tokyo* and declare, “You roll dice, just like *Yahtzee*...” it’s game over — you’ve lost them.

Teaching games is a two-way street. Reading your players and adjusting can lead to a smooth, positive experience. Often, players at your table are a mixed bag — somewhere between “let’s just play” and “tell me every detail!” Jay Moore, another *Geekway to the West* organizer, includes players in the discussion: “Set expectations about the time it will take to go over rules. If people want to learn, they will let you



know. If someone objects, don’t force the issue, choose something else.”

Eric Summerer, Co-Host and Production Director of *The Dice Tower Podcast*, agrees. “It’s a tricky aspect, trying to gauge the will of your audience and how in detail they want to go. I’ve actually asked that question: do you want to deal with this later, or do you want to figure it out right now? There is usually a consensus at the table.”

Engaging your audience

Engaging your audience removes the guesswork and takes some pressure off of you. Most light to mid-level games, especially for new gamers, can be a good choice because they are pretty straightforward. You can cover a lot of detail and still not worry about overload, which can leave the impression that a game is too complicated.

When balancing between two types of gamers, Eric Summerer errs towards getting people to the table: “I think you have to favor the former; the group that will overload, because overload is an issue.” He further illustrates: “Let’s say you favor the people that want to hear all the rules...if you go through all the rules, then you’re going to totally glaze over and overwhelm the people that just want to get playing, and they’re not going to know what they are doing because they are overloaded. It’s going to be a really bad experience for everyone.”

Kathleen's approach is similar, if a bit more neutral: "Sometimes it just comes to, kind of diplomatically, making sure that people are all in a good position to just start the game and play from there." This doesn't mean you have to exclude people that want to know more — instead, use them to your advantage. Rule enthusiasts are into rules, right? They like the details. Send them a copy of the rulebook ahead of time. Recruit them to help you teach the game. Odds are they will, and can help fact check while you are teaching.

Finding the correct pace

Finding the correct pace means knowing what to leave in or take out. Look for rules that aren't intuitive or that are repeated in the manual, called out in a sidebar, or clarified as examples. Those are usually the big exceptions you need to emphasize while you are teaching, and players need to know before you start the game. Player aides are also a great supplemental tool. Oftentimes, publishers include player aids in the form of turn summary cards, quick reference sheets, and FAQs. Use them! They provide quick in-game reference. Websites like BoardGameGeek (www.boardgamegeek.com) and The Esoteric Order of Gamers (www.orderofgamers.com) have a vast library of gamer created material that can help, as well.

Teaching a game doesn't end when you start playing. Connecting the rules to what is happening in game is equally important. Let an experienced player start, maybe you; someone at the table who has played the game before. Talk through the turn and explain what is happening. This might jog your memory about missed rules, and players might think of a question that didn't occur to them previously. Depending on the game, explain why you are taking certain actions. It can be advantageous to give players general starting goals or tips, but be careful about giving too much away. Figuring out the strategies in a game is part of the fun and you don't want to give the impression you are playing the game for them.

Relax

Will all of this guarantee you won't miss anything or create an in-game headache? No — but relax, the reality is that it's not as big of an issue as it feels like. "If you are learning the game, it's not an ideal situation," Eric points out when asked about rule pitfalls. "The learners (players) need to be willing to accept that occasionally something is going to get missed." Stephen Buonocore, President of Stronghold Games, agrees: "People have to be forgiving about rule teaching. It's not a science, it really isn't. You have to take certain guidelines and not be so hung up if you don't get it right...If people don't accept that, they'll need to be the ones doing the rules themselves next time. They should be willing to go and teach rules themselves."

Across the board, other people echoed similar sentiment. No matter the preparation, rules get missed, but most people understand it's the cost of entry to learning a game. They're happy you're teaching them.

Again, Jay handles the situation by setting the expectation openly: "This could happen, in fact it probably will. I'm probably going to miss a thing or two so bear with me and if that happens and it really messes up your strategy, then we'll figure out how to



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deal with it when we get there and try to make it more equitable for everybody.” He also let me in on one of his secrets about managing the situation: “if a game is going well, everybody’s having a good time and it doesn’t seem like it really breaks anything, then I’ll just stay quiet and explain it after the game’s over.” Someone might get upset from time to time, but that is their concern, not yours.

Gaming is a social experience

At the end of the day, most gamers care less about winning and more about having fun. “Winning is less important than the experience. First of all, the experience is always most important,” affirms Stephen, referring to his philosophy on games and gaming. “I game for the experience of my friends and

hanging out. There is always next time if you mess something up...we’re here to have a good time and play a game. If this didn’t go perfectly and a rule gets missed, then we’ll play again.”

If the experience is positive before and during the game, even if the game isn’t perfect, then there will definitely be a next time. “At the end of the day, we are pushing around wood, paper, and plastic,” Kathleen reflects. “The thing is, anytime somebody is teaching me a game, they are doing me a favor and I appreciate what they are doing. It’s that they are trying to add joy, interest, challenge, and competition into my life.”

Being willing to teach a game makes you an ambassador to the gaming hobby, helping people discover great games and engage in an immensely rewarding social experience. Have fun. Enjoy it. Jay sums it up best, “If you’re the teacher, then good for you. The world needs more good teachers.” 🎲

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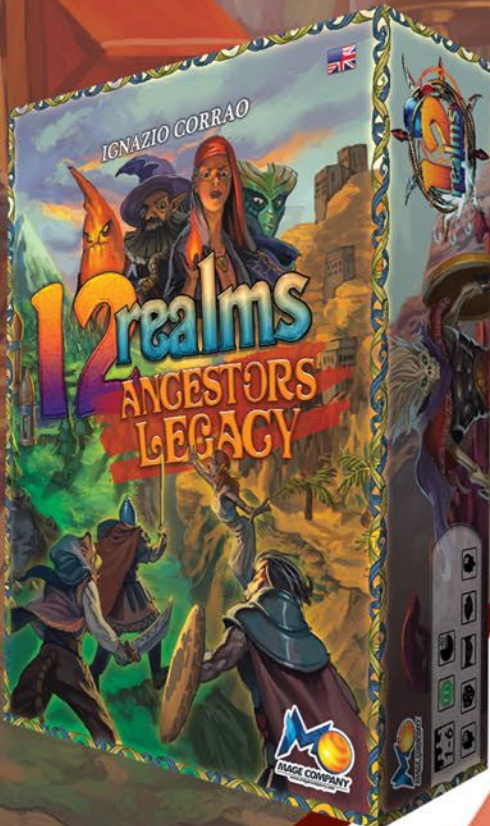
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Ancestors Legacy will provide a much different game through its Plots. There are now eight different Plots for both the first edition and the new one, which will include a background story and will significantly increase the difficulty and excitement of the game – increasing the amount of decisions that players will have to make. Now, more than ever, team camaraderie will be necessary in order to reach victory! For each of the new Plots, you will discover different and customizable game set-ups.



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Charlie Hoopes

Designer of *Fill The Barn* (and unpublished games *Attatat*, *FireBreak*, and *Planet Chasers*)

Do you ever find it hard to find someone to play a game with you? For game designers, it is tougher still to find players willing to try a homemade game prototype. Family and friends may be willing, yet their feedback might be biased. They may like your game just because they already like you. Or they may be afraid to tell you what they don't like for fear of hurt feelings. Where does an aspiring game designer turn to get unbiased, anonymous feedback on their creation? For many of us, the answer is Unpub.

October 9-10, 2010 — John Moller enters a game design contest hosted by Rio Grande Games at the Congress of Gamers in Rockville, Maryland. When John meets the other competitors, something amazing happens: they play each other's prototypes, suggest improvements, share design experiences, and form friendships. John wonders, "How could I make that happen again?" In January 2011, nine designers from four different states bring twelve game prototypes to a church fellowship hall outside of Dover, Delaware, for a weekend of playtest fun. Unpub is born and the magic begins. This weekend is later dubbed Unpub1.

Fearing there wouldn't be enough prototypes for the weekend, John's longtime friend Darrell Louder created the prototype of *Compounded* just days before Unpub1. Dice Hate Me Games published two games from Unpub1: *Viva Java* and *Compounded*. Darrell shared his experiences debuting *Compounded*: "I was incredibly surprised by the feedback. Yes, it had plenty of flaws, but everyone was encouraging me to continue it and to keep at it."

Those first two Unpub1 prototypes to receive publication contracts would not be the last. *Salmon Run* (featured on the cover of the Spring 2013 issue of *Casual Game Insider*) and *Mars Needs Mechanics* (recently added to *Casual Game Insider's* list of recommended

casual games) are also Unpub graduates. By October 2014, the Unpub Alumni web page listed over 40 games signed by publishers after Unpub playtesting.

The success of Unpub1 led to Unpub2 in January 2012, then Unpub3 in January 2013. Every year drew more designers, more playtesters, and growing participation from game publishers. Unpub quickly became more than one big weekend in January. Game stores in the mid-Atlantic states (and quickly beyond) agreed to host Unpub Mini playtest events throughout the year. My first Unpub experience was through a Mini.

"When we were developing *Havok & Hijinks* we had been through some successful playtests. Our major concern was that we were familiar with most of the playtesters. When we had an opportunity to do an Unpub Mini we jumped at it."

— Adam "Ferrel" Trzonkowski



May 27, 2012 — I attend my first Unpub Mini at Labyrinth Games in Washington, D.C. At the table beside me is Ben Rosset with a prototype of *Mars Needs Mechanics* (Nevermore Games, 2013). Behind me is Mike Young with a prototype of *Meteor* (Mayday, scheduled 2015 release). Throughout the day I have an unending stream of playtesters sitting down to play my abstract game *Attatat*. People I have never met before are playing my homemade prototype, enjoying it, and filling out anonymous feedback forms telling what they like and what could be made better.

Designers declare that opportunities to interact with other designers are one of the greatest strengths of the Unpub program.

Also, Unpub play and feedback are a recipe that leads to playtested games that are publisher-ready. For instance, the quick-grab card game *Tessen* was one of the stars of Unpub3, where it was discovered by Van Ryder Games.

But Unpub is not just for designers and publishers. Unpub is for people who like to play games. No matter what themes, length, or complexity you prefer, the variety of games at any Unpub event is sure to hold something for you. All you have to do is sit down at the table and learn from the designer how to play. This is your chance to play the newest games before they are published, and to help shape them into even better games. Afterwards, you will be asked to complete a short Unpub feedback form (either

“As a designer, the best part about Unpub has been connecting with other designers.”

**— Steven Cole,
Designer of *Conquest of Orion***

electronic or paper), where you will rate the game in eight areas and answer a few questions about what you like and dislike. Names are optional; feedback can remain anonymous. Designers also welcome direct face-to-face feedback.

Because of your feedback, great prototypes evolve into even better games.

“The Unpub network has been absolutely invaluable for discovering new talent and new games; 10 of our titles were found through Unpub. From a publishing perspective, I know a vast majority of the games that are being filtered and refined through the Unpub system are heading toward top-level quality.”

— Chris Kirkman, owner of Dice Hate Me Games



Industry Panel at Unpub Protospiel San Jose. From left: Richard Bliss (*Funding the Dream* podcast), Grant Rodiek (designer of *Farmageddon*, *Hyperbole* game design blog), Kevin Nunn (designer of *Rolling Freight*, *Duck Duck Go*, *Schlock Mercenary*, *Sentinel Tactics: The Flame of Freedom*, *Velo City*, *Zong Shi* and many others), Eric Vogel (designer of *Zeppelin Attack*), Ted Alspach (Bezier Games, designer of *One Night Ultimate Werewolf*, *Suburbia*, *Ultimate Werewolf*), Aldo Ghiozzi (*Impressions Game Distribution*), Sam Waller (*SlugFest Games*), David Sirlin (*Sirlin Games*, designer of *Yomi*, *Flash Duel*, *Pandante*), Seth Jaffe (*Tasty Minstrel Games*), and Jeff Cornelius (*Cosmic Wombat Games*).



June 1, 2013 — I'm at an Unpub Mini at Six Feet Under in New Holland, Pennsylvania. My cooperative forest firefighting game FireBreak has been steadily improving following several Minis that spring. Unpub regular Ben Begeal helps his group control the flames, then comments, "It was fun, but I never felt like we were ever in danger." While sometimes I mull over player feedback, this time I instantly recognize Ben is absolutely right. Afterwards, I make a pivotal change to the game's design. Instead of tallying points at the end for unburned areas, I flip it around. I give a perfect score at the game start and deduct points throughout whenever blazes spread, letting players sweat it out as their score lowers ever closer to zero.

"When designers test each other's games, great things happen."

— Max Jamelli

"The opportunity to meet my brilliant peers and challenge myself to give them helpful feedback has helped me by leaps and bounds to grow as a designer."

— Jay Treat

"I would never have been published without Unpub. At my first Unpub, my eyes were opened as to the depth and breadth of fantastic games being published, and I met so many great designers, publishers, and players who have all helped me find my way."

— Matthew O'Malley, Designer,
Black Oak Games

August 2013 — John Moller announced that he was stepping back from the Unpub program, and handing the reins over to trusted friend and Compounded designer Darrell Louder. With Darrell at the helm, the designers, playtesters, and publishers kept Unpub marching along.

Unpub continued local Minis at Friendly Local Game Stores (FLGS), while also growing a presence at gaming conventions such as BGG.CON. Unpub4 in January 2014 was bigger than Unpub3 the year before, and outgrowing Dover, Delaware. A 3-day combined Unpub/Protospiel event in San Jose, California in May 2014 drew 37 registered designers with a total of over 200 participants.

Unpub5 will be held at the Baltimore Convention Center February 6-8, 2015. The 50 designer tables sold out within hours when registration opened 8 months beforehand in July 2014. Other than a new location for the annual big event, I asked Darrell what else Casual Game Insider readers should expect from Unpub in 2015. "Well, everyone has been asking for an Unpub West. I want to be able to offer that, I want an annual Unpub West event that is similar to the last 4 Unpub events we have had on the East Coast. So that is a plan — nothing solid yet, but certainly in my mind. I also am looking to expand the brand even more with phone applications, a more robust website, and a few other surprises. Everything is picking up steam, and I need to start farming in a staff to help keep heads above water and the designers/playtesters happy."

How can you play games so new they haven't been published, meet the designers, and influence what could be the next great game? How can you enjoy the Unpub experience?



Matthew O'Malley, designer of Diner, playtests Hostage Negotiator by A.J. Porfirio at Unpub3. Courtesy of Scott King Photography.

One way is to get to Unpub5, where admission for playtesters is free. You can also look for Unpub playtest zones at several major conventions. The convention list varies from year to year, with recent official Unpub presences at Pax East, Congress of Gamers, GrandCon, Gamehole Con, and BGG.CON.

"For players, Unpub is a fantastic opportunity to play lots of interesting games and do something of value with your time."

— Jeremy Commandeur

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“We might not have gotten our first game, *Tessen*, published without Unpub. In the space of one weekend we met some brilliant designers, got great feedback on our design, and met the publisher who signed our game. Where else could that happen?”

— Chris & Suzanne Zinsli of Cardboard Edison

“As a small publisher, one of the best ways to find the next game is to meet with designers at conventions and demo their games. Unpub weeds out all the noise of a general convention and focuses purely on prototypes and designers seeking a publisher — what more could I ask for? In fact, we’ve signed one game from Unpub in each of the last two years!”

— A.J. Porfirio, Van Ryder Games

However, you don’t have to travel to Unpub5 or a gaming convention to experience Unpub. You can bring Unpub to you, at a venue and date of your choosing. Any game store, designer, publisher, or player can host an Unpub Mini event. To learn how easy it is to host your own Unpub Mini, visit the Unpub website (www.unpub.net/contact/minis) for instructions on how to organize an event and publicize it within the Unpub network.

Game designers looking for the opportunity to learn from fellow designers: Unpub is for you. Publishers: you will never find a

larger collection of game prototypes and designers than what will gather in Baltimore in early February. Your next big hit may be lurking there, waiting for you to discover.

Players: we need you most of all! Whether in Baltimore, at a gaming convention, or at an Unpub Mini at your FLGS, we are creating these games for you to enjoy. Our tables are open. Pull up a chair. We would love to play our games with you. ☺



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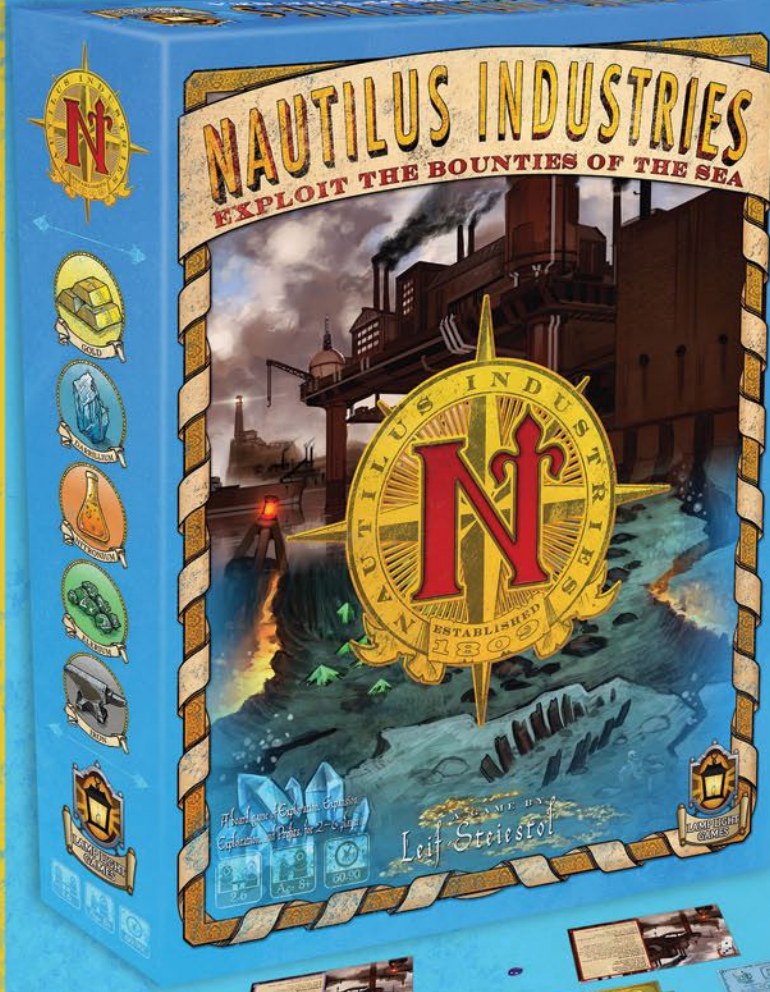
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Looney BEGINNINGS: A LIFE IN FLUXX

Looney Labs has been a successful player in the board game industry for decades. People often ask how we got started, so here's the complete story from the very beginning.



Andy Looney

CCO & Founder of
Looney Labs

In college, I took a lot of English classes because I found I had an aptitude for writing, but I majored in computer science because I wanted a job when I graduated. I went to work for NASA, just like my father, and I spent eight years programming

computers for the space agency. I wrote code that flew on the Hubble Space Telescope, and I met the awesome woman who would become my wife. And in my spare time, I wrote short stories.

Building the Pyramids

In the summer of 1987 I wrote a tale called "Icehouse," in which a recurring plot element was a non-existent board game by that name. The story was a hit with my circle of readers, but mostly because of that intriguing, fictional game. "That pyramid game sounds great!" they'd say. "Where can I get it?" I had described Icehouse in such intricate detail (more

than five paragraphs within the first two pages) that it seemed like it must be a real game — but it was anything but playable.

And so, the challenge was on to create an actual game like the one I'd described. I made the first set of Icehouse pyramids using lead fishing weights, but I hadn't yet



developed the skills to design a game and I couldn't make my concepts work. Then my friend Chort cranked up the pressure by making me an even nicer prototype, using clear-cast plastic resin. I continued to flounder, but by now my obsession had spread to my life-long friend (and fellow second-generation NASA employee) John Cooper. He borrowed my fishing-weights prototype and brooded.

Then one night John called with exciting ideas, and we met up at a diner to play our first real game of *Icehouse*. It was exhilarating! It wasn't quite the game I had

imagined my characters playing, but it was close enough. We were off!

One of the first people I showed the new game to was my co-worker Kristin (who I hadn't even started dating yet). She also got really excited about the game, and she became the third person to create a set of pyramids, using modeling clay that bakes hard in the oven. Kristin enjoyed designing computer chips for NASA, but at heart she was an entrepreneur and she instantly became interested in helping us get this game published, even if it meant starting a company. Which, of course, it did.

Starting a Business

Our first business was called Icehouse Games and it was a hobby-level company. No real employees, no working capital, just a few friends trying to figure out how to publish a game. Fortunately, we stumbled upon a book called *Game Plan: The Game Inventor's Handbook*, written by Stephen Peek in 1987. We read that book cover to cover, over and over again. One of its clearest messages was one of discouragement; I still often quote from "The Prospective Game Creator's No-Win Quiz" about how you'll probably be better off taking your life savings to Vegas and plunking it all down on a single spin of the roulette wheel — it'll be faster and less painful and your odds of success are better. But for those who were insistent on trying to publish their own game, that book was a treasure trove of helpful advice.

And so, twenty-five years ago, we tested the waters with our first production run of 100 game sets. We packaged them in a stark black box and we made the pyramids ourselves, using clear plastic resin we hand-poured into ice-cube-tray-like molds engineered by another NASA friend, Charles Dickson. The stench



Kristin shows off the first 100 sets of IceHouse

from this home-based factory almost got me kicked out of my apartment, and halfway through we had to relocate the operation to the kitchen of Kristin's top floor apartment in order to finish making those first 100 sets.

The Dream Fizzles Out

Those original pyramids were beautiful to play with but they were WAY too much trouble to keep producing using that system. With no affordable alternatives available to us, the pyramids were basically unavailable for years at a time. The only way to get into the system was to make your own set. To help,

we made a do-it-yourself kit consisting of punch-out, fold-up card stock pyramids, and we kept the dream alive by promoting the game with our annual tournament and an occasional newsletter.



Icehouse was a cool enough game to hold our interest for almost a decade, but by 1995, the dream was slowly dying. We'd had to concede that *Icehouse* itself was too complex and esoteric a game to really succeed in the marketplace, yet it was still the

only game for the pyramids. And while it may seem obvious now, at the time it took quite a mental leap to begin designing other games for the pyramids, particularly for someone who still wasn't thinking of himself as a game designer.

Breaking the Ice



Icebreaker, published in 1995 for 3DO Interactive Multiplayer console

Also around this time, I had an opportunity to write software for a new "multi-media" company called Magnet Interactive Studios. As much as I'd enjoyed working for NASA, I couldn't resist the chance to program game software, and in doing so I inadvertently created a video game of my own. It was called *Icebreaker*, and Magnet actually published it shortly before going out of business. It was released in 1995 for the 3DO gaming system,

which was crushed by the Sony Playstation the following year.

Despite its market failure, creating *Icebreaker* was a major linchpin in my life. It made me finally realize that I could design games if I really set my mind to it, and it was after this breakthrough that I finally started inventing totally new pyramid games. But *Icebreaker* also revealed my frustration with the pyramids: this game was all about destroying "evil" pyramids (which looked just like *Icehouse* pieces). The rules also called pyramids "sneaky, cunning, loathsome, and even pernicious." The object of *Icebreaker* was to smash, shoot, or otherwise destroy a field of standing pyramids while avoiding the deadly touch of animated pyramids, twisting and shambling and relentlessly moving towards you. It was like being attacked by my most beloved creations during a crazy, surreal nightmare.

Starting Over

In 1995 we finally discovered the true greatness of the pyramids: as a game system. We were a long way from the vast library of games that we and others would gradually invent over the next twenty years. Indeed, in those days we were still so focused on old-school thinking that we considered solid pieces the ideal (since such pieces are best for the original game). We were still blind to the vast design possibilities that would open up when we made the pyramids hollow, stackable, and nestable.

As excitement grew about the great new ways to play with the pyramids, the same-old problem became increasingly frustrating: how to get the pieces made? Each new game spurred new interest in making the pyramids a commercial success, so once again Kristin looked into what it would take to get injection-molded pieces manufactured. The answer for domestic manufacturing was at least \$10,000 in tool-making costs alone. Ouch.



This all led up to one of the biggest linchpins of my life: July 24, 1996. Kristin and I were driving somewhere, talking about these various problems, and she said: "These pyramids are killing me. Why don't you invent a card game? I could get a card game published easy." And that question fired my imagination like few questions ever have.

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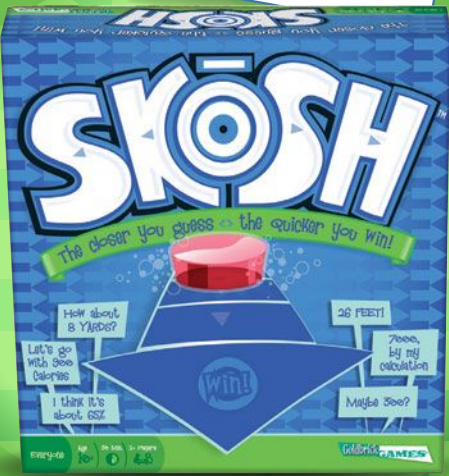
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Fluxx is Born



The latest edition of Fluxx, the card game with ever-changing rules

Like most of my best designs, the ideas for *Fluxx* coalesced very quickly, seeming almost to appear fully-formed in my brain. By the end of the day, I had the basic concepts all worked out.

After years of struggling to promote a game that was difficult to learn, my biggest goal was a game so easy

An Instant Hit

Just as Kristin predicted, card games were so much easier to create than board games. Even making the first prototype was a snap – the next day we were ready to try it out. And wow, did it ever work! Way better than I'd expected! We could tell instantly that we had a hit on our hands, and we wanted to start selling it as fast as we could. We polished it up, put together some artwork ourselves, and were ready to head to print.

And the rest, as they say, is history. True to her word, Kristin had no trouble getting a card game printed, and publishing *Fluxx* was like hitting the lottery. Suddenly we had a bestseller, and that's what really let us launch our company. *Fluxx* sells far better than everything else we've published, combined – it's because of *Fluxx* that we have the funding available to publish other games like *Chrononauts*, *Loonacy*, *Just Desserts*, and of course, *Looney Pyramids* (as we now call them).

you could jump in and start playing immediately. I also wanted it to play differently every time, so that the replay value would be high. And somehow, I got the idea of making it a game that would change as you play it.

One of the biggest influences on *Fluxx* was a conceptual game called *Nomic*, invented by Peter Suber in 1982. In *Nomic*, the players can change the rules in any way they all agree upon, but since the ruleset was completely open-ended, and so dependent on democracy, our games always fell apart before really going anywhere. This gave me the idea of creating a game where the players could change the rules, but only within specific, pre-determined ways.

I drew on my background as a computer programmer to create a flexible structure for *Fluxx*, with card types being like software modules: each used common elements while also being “programmed” with custom “code.” The game was easy to learn because each card carried its own set of instructions, and you could just look at the cards on the table to see what the rules of the game had become at any given point. To win, you simply had to collect a specific pair of thingies, which I called Keepers because you kept them.





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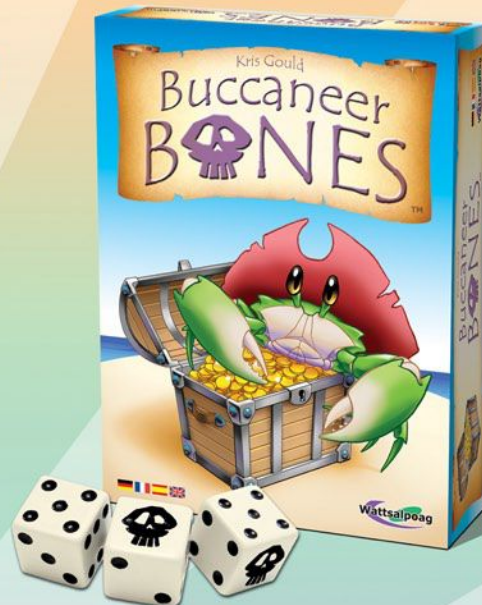
The Big Picture

Sometimes our lives hinge on a few small but meaningful moments. For me, I had no idea that including a quirky game in an inconsequential short story would change the direction of my life forever. But it did. Nor would I have guessed that a small stroke of inspiration would give me lifelong success as a game designer. But it did. If only we could see the big picture, maybe we could better appreciate those small moments when our lives are about to change forever. 🎲



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